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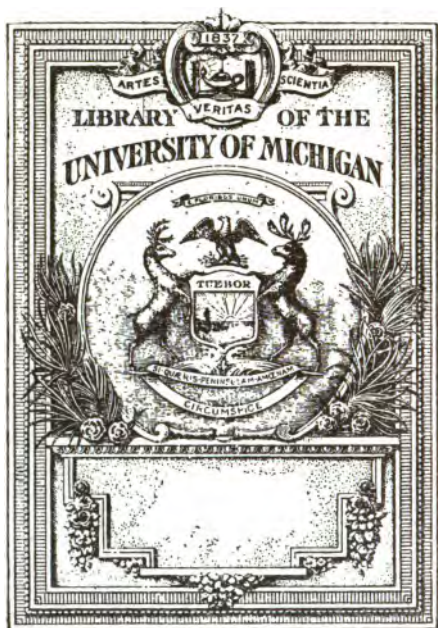
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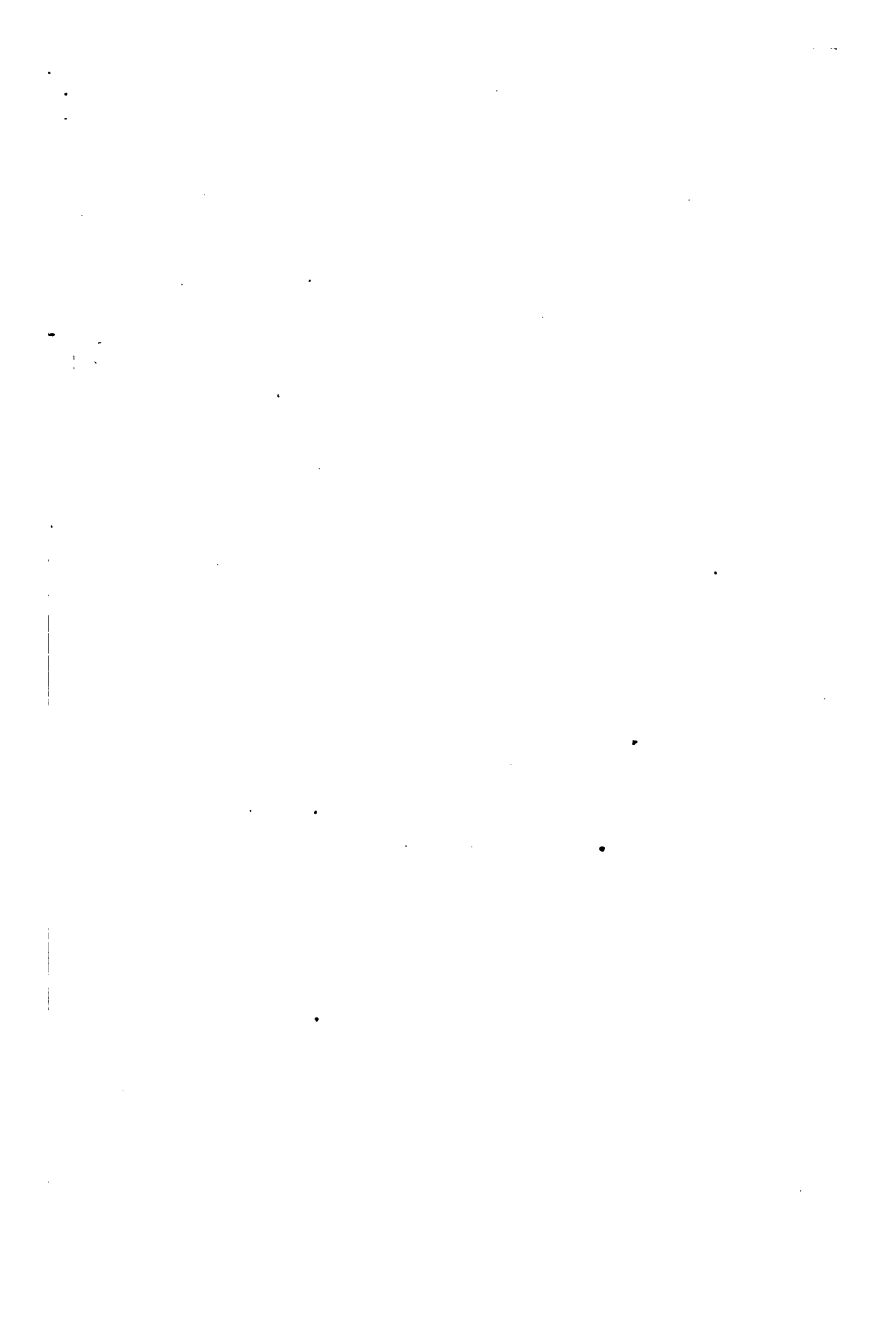
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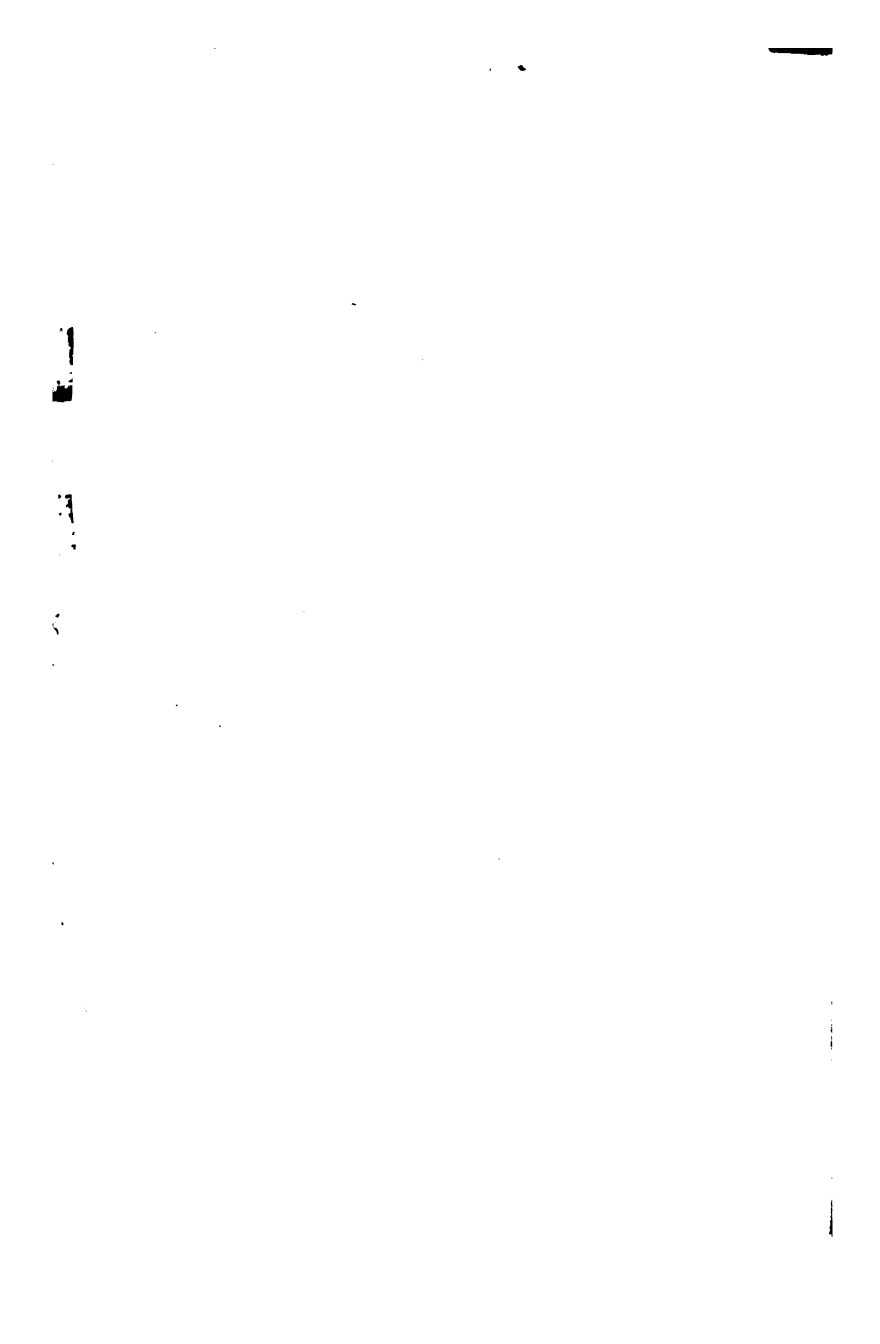
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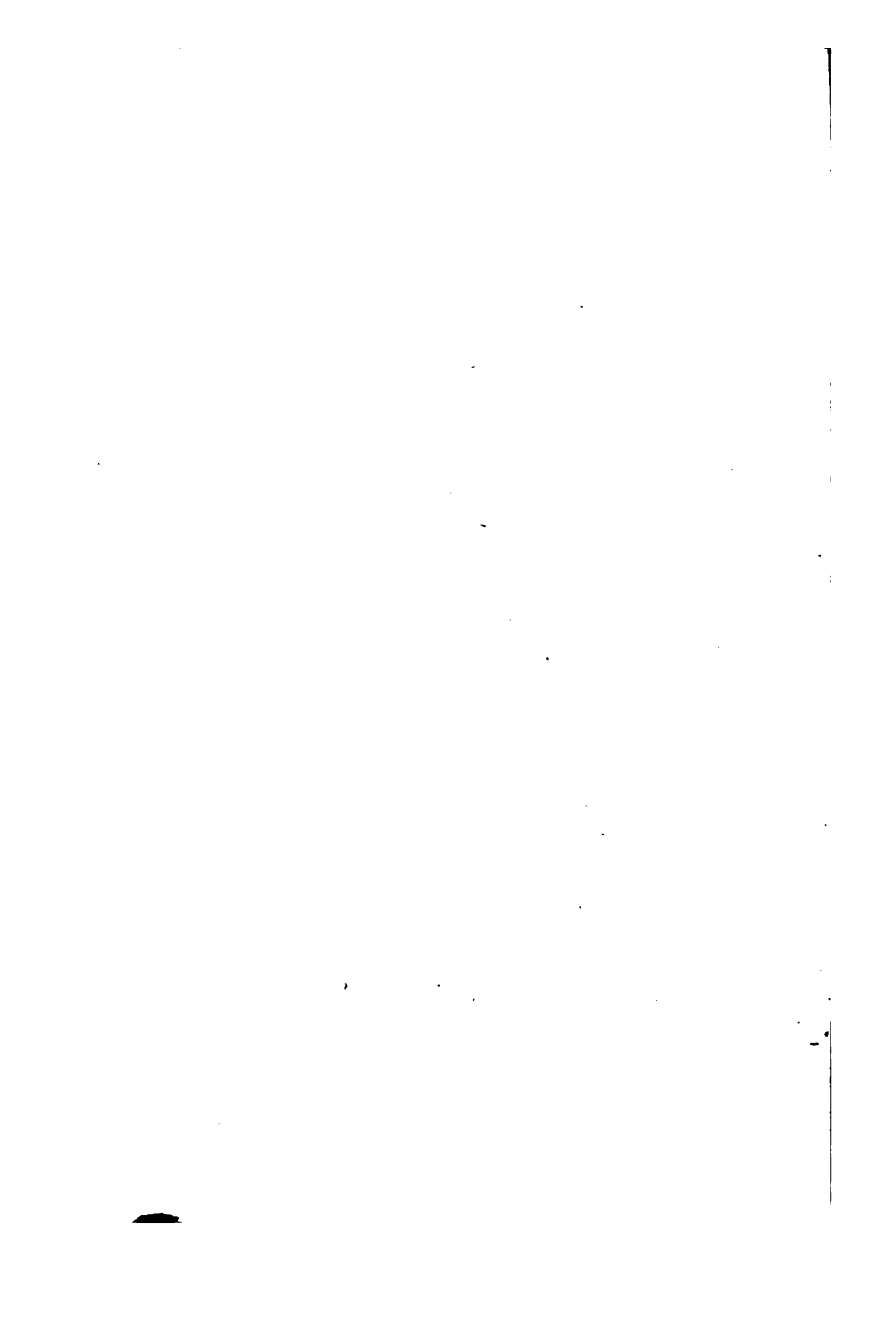


The A.A.





AN OLD MAN'S HOLIDAYS



An Old Man's Holidays

BY

THE AMATEUR ANGLER

Author of "On a Sunshine Holyday,"

"Days in Dovedale," etc.

London, 24th April, 1825-

"For I have loved the rural walk through lanes
Of grassy swarth, close cropped by nibbling sheep;
... have loved the rural walk
O'er hills, through valleys, and by river's brink."

Cowper.

Second Edition

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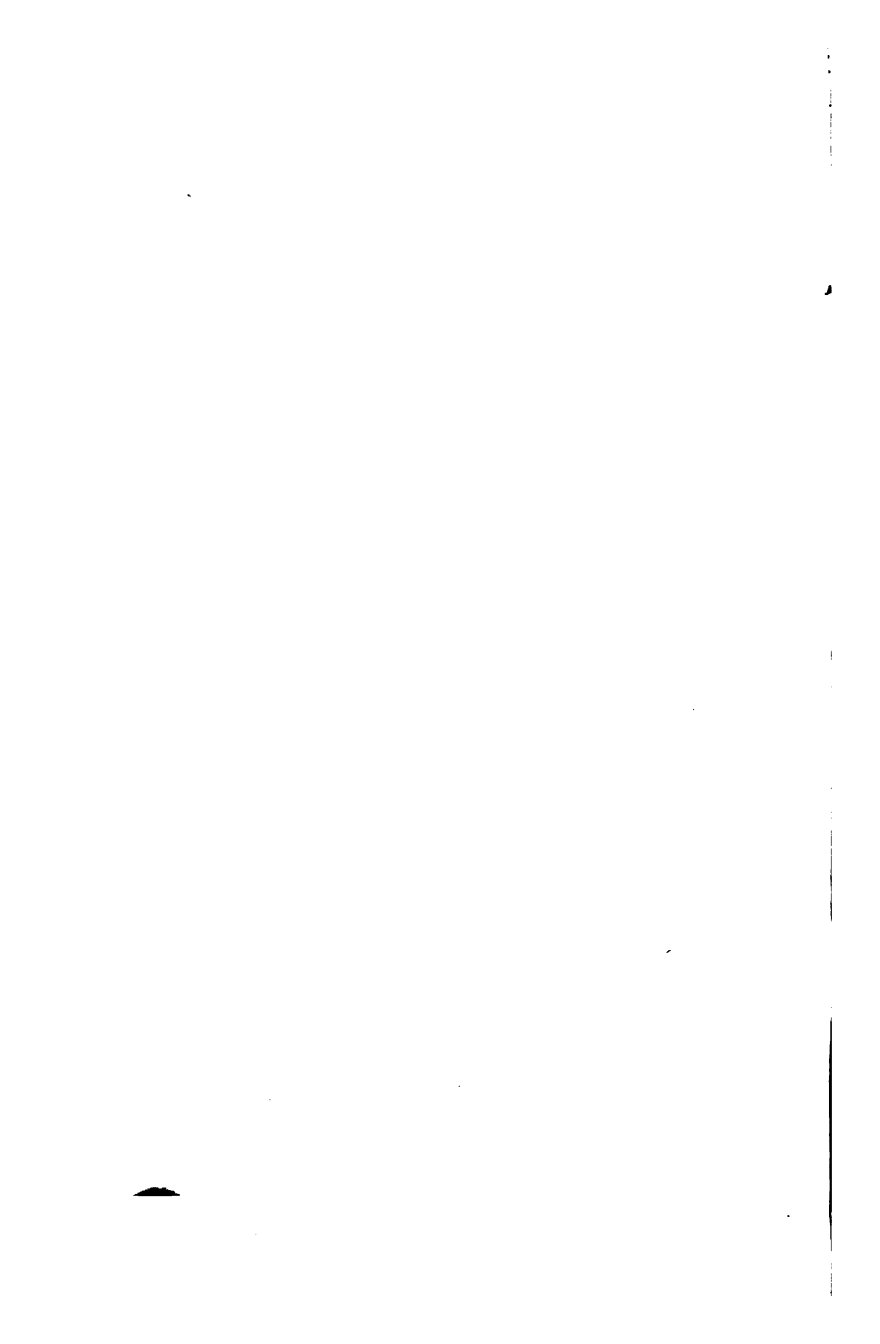
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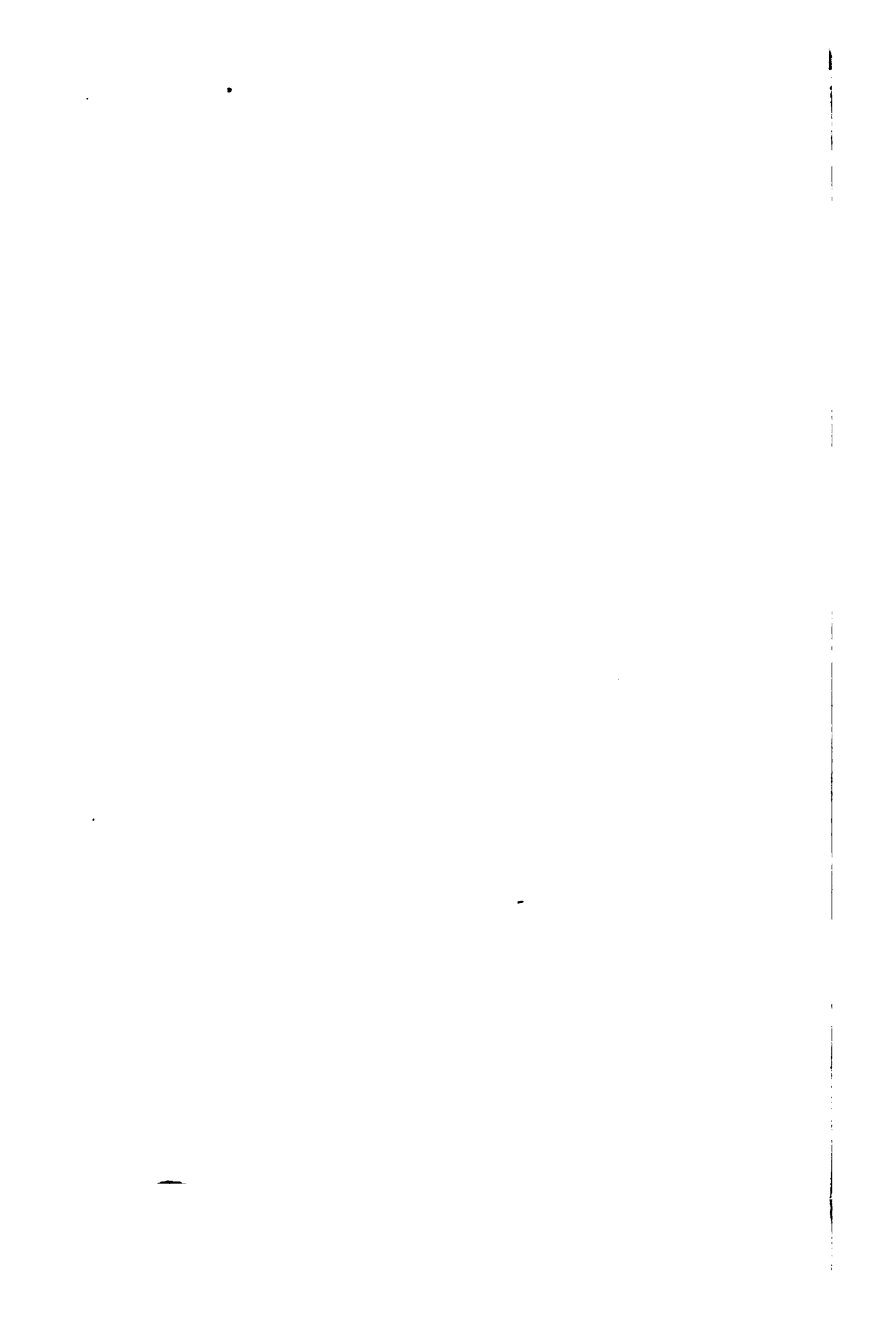
TO my son R. B. M. (Piscator Major), and to my good friend G. Y. (The Professor), *expert anglers both, my frequent companions on my Angling Excursions*, I dedicate this little book.

The thoughtful care of the former in all that contributes to my welfare, and especially in providing me with the needful implements of destruction when I go a-fishing, and the unselfish anxiety with which the latter, by good advice and ready help, sought to save me from many a scrape into which my juvenile rashness and inexperience must otherwise have plunged me, surely deserve and demand this slight recognition of their goodness, and I seize with pleasure the opportunity which is here afforded me of expressing to them my love, my gratitude, and my good wishes.

THE AMATEUR ANGLER.

LONDON,
August 1900.







NOTE

MANY a year has gone by since I first bethought me of Angling as an occupation for my brief holidays. It was in July 1884, sixteen years ago, that I first cast my line on the pleasant river Dove, where it winds through the enchanting scenery of Dovedale. I was truly but an *amateur angler* then, and I claim to be nothing more than an amateur now; that I take to mean an unaccomplished lover of the angle, for although the art of angling has ever since possessed for me a growing fascination, my opportunities have been so rare that even now after sixteen years of enthusiasm I find myself painfully deficient in the skilful manipulation that comes first by nature (for one must be born to it) and then by continuous practice. I must, however, in extenuation, hold the bad weather I most frequently had, in a large degree accountable for the repeated failures herein recorded.

If I were called upon to tell why I have taken the trouble to print in a book these holiday sketches, I could only say that I have done the same thing before, and my efforts have been only too kindly appreciated by a number of friends who have asked for "more," and also by very many most friendly critics who have chosen to be "to my faults a little blind, and to my virtues ever kind."

Since my last booklet, *On a Sunshine Holyday*, was published, many of my old friends have taken the voyage

"Across to that strange country, the Beyond."

Among these, first and foremost, was my dear old friend, for nearly forty years, R. D. BLACKMORE, who always took a most lively interest in my books, and whose kindly letters about them I hold as golden treasures. Not the least treasure is that singular little prose-poem which he did me the honour of writing specially as a kindly introduction for my book *By Meadow and Stream*.

Mr Blackmore was my junior only by a few months. Beneath a portrait of him in my possession he has written the following quaint and characteristic note of his birth—

NOTE

"I was launched into this vale of tears on the 7th of June, 1825 at Longworth in Berkshire. Before I was four months old, my mother was taken to a better world, and so I started crookedly."

Then, or rather before him, in the order of time, WILLIAM BLACK was called away. He died comparatively young, but my acquaintance with him began thirty years ago, and to him I am indebted for many most kindly and encouraging letters about my small literary attempts.

It has been a source of no small pleasure to me that the authors of books so widely known as *Lorna Doone* and *The Princess of Thule* should have given me so much encouragement, but it will be remembered that Mr Blackmore was an ardent trout angler, and as for Mr Black, I fancy he felt more pride in catching a twenty-five pound salmon than in writing one of his best novels—and he certainly did not despise the superior art of fly fishing for trout; there we were on common ground.

Then again let me call to mind and to memory my old friend J. G. MORTON—a most skilful trout and salmon angler, and all-round sportsman—he too, only a few months ago, went very suddenly over to join "the great majority." It was in his good company that I spent many a pleasant day on the Wiltshire Avon—as recorded in this and my previous volume, *On a Sunshine Holyday*. Lastly, among my old angling friends, let me bear an old man's testimony to Doctor JOHN WISLIN, who went to his rest only a few months ago. He was seventy-five when I first knew him—bale and hearty, happy and joyous, an enthusiastic fly fisher, both for salmon and trout, who wielded a mighty rod, heavy as a weaver's beam, as easily as I could wield an eight-ounce Leonard. He it was who first introduced me to the *Tichen*, and there for several years we fished together and had very pleasant times, the memory whereof will linger with me all my days. He gave up fishing when he was eighty-two or thereabouts, and now at the good old age of eighty-seven he too has crossed to "the Beyond."

These reminiscences, *de senectute*, in reminding me that I myself am no longer young, suggested the title I have given to my book.

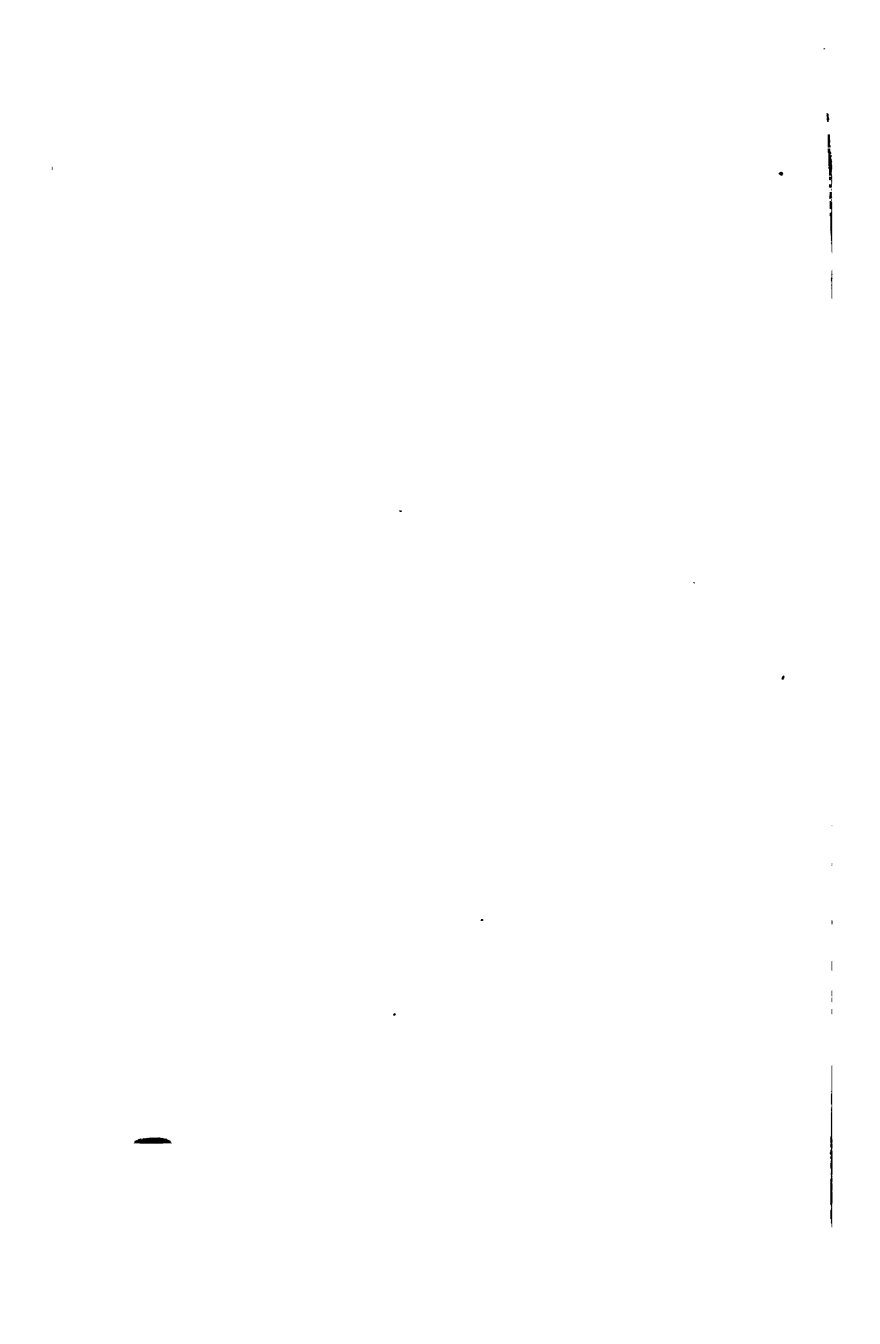
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NOTE TO SECOND EDITION.

THE First Edition of "An Old Man's Holidays" having been sold out at once, and the type distributed, I would fain have allowed it there to rest, and been thankful. The urgency of, I fear, rather injudicious friends, has, however, induced me, with some misgiving, to venture on the production of a *Second Edition* in a slightly altered form. The occasion of the appearance of this new Edition gives me at least this satisfaction, that it enables me to thank my readers, and, I may say, the whole round of the Press, for the extreme kindness and generosity with which my unpretentious little book has been received.

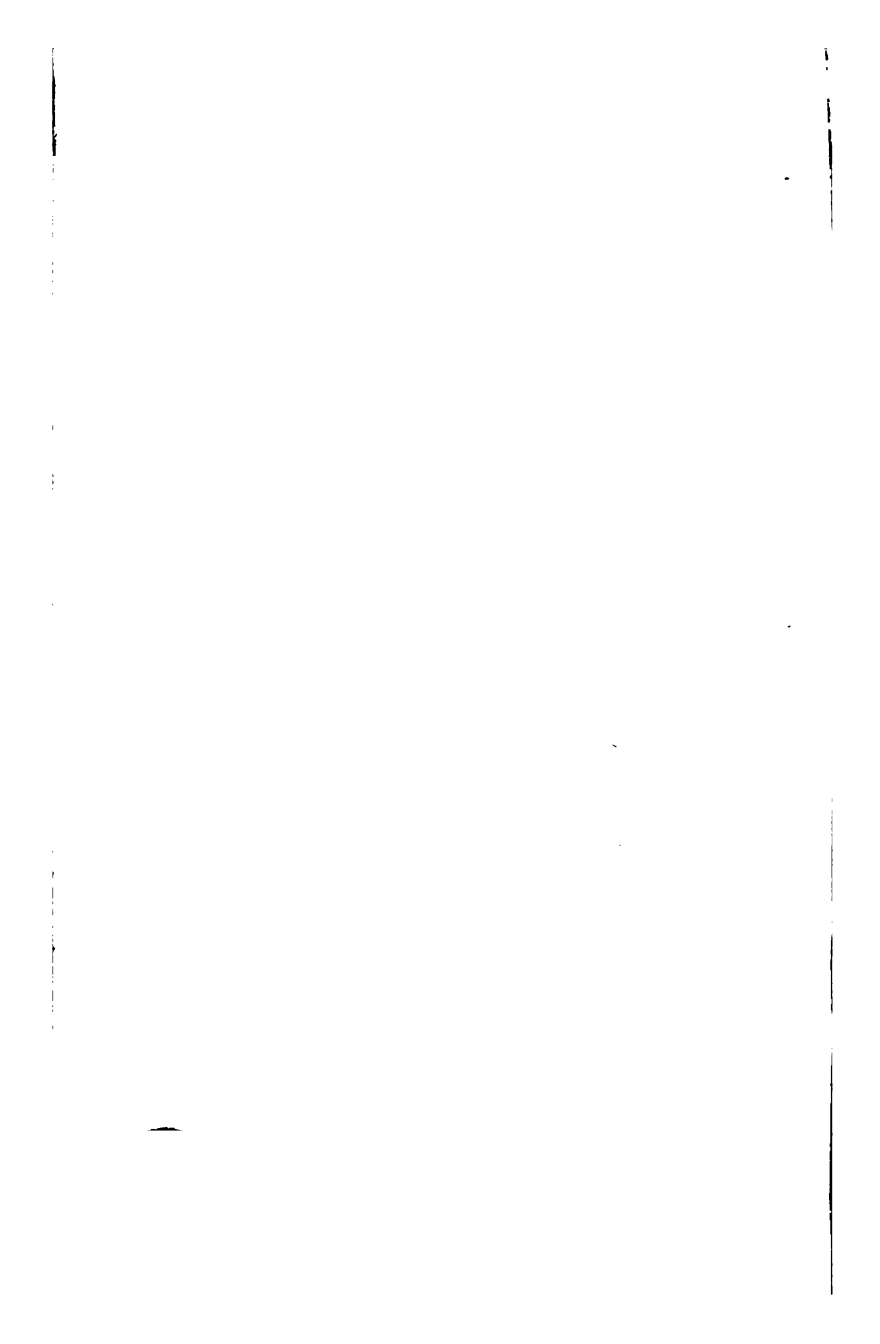
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AN OLD MAN'S HOLIDAYS

CHAPTER I

EASTER FLY FISHING ON THE ITCHEN

April 1898

IT is now about seven months since last I had the gratification of holding a fly rod in my hand, and then it was in the rocky bed of the pleasant Barle. We came down here on April 6, "Piscator" and I, to our old quarters on the Itchen—I with the pleasurable anticipations of an "*amateur*," he with the doubt and misgiving of bottled-up experience. I looked forward to bright sunshine, green meadows, the songs of birds, and the hum of bees on the willow catkins. He, with the wisdom of a sage, foretelling that, whatever the weather may be, we were at least a month too early for the aristocratic trout that inhabit the Itchen.

Our first afternoon was fine and breezy, but there was no fly on the water, and, therefore, nothing for

trout to rise at, had they been so inclined ; but there they were, with their tails flapping about in the air, and their heads deep down amongst the grass and weeds, showing a kind of contempt for the mere dry-fly fisherman. In truth I am inclined to formulate a little theory of my own about these sophisticated trout. There is undoubtedly, and it has been noticeable for some time past, a growing scarcity of flies on our waters. Why is it? Is it not because our river is so persistently flogged for trout all through the spring and summer, and for grayling all through the autumn and winter, that the fish have grown suspicious of these deceptive insects floating above them, and so devote themselves more and more to the insect larvæ which they find below, and hence the scarcity of natural flies on the surface? This little theory will at all events serve to explain the fact of the tailing we did see on that first afternoon, and of the rise we did not see.

It has long since become an axiom that if you have a fine Friday a fine Sunday will as surely follow as night followeth day ; and, indeed, it does so frequently turn out to be true that an exception only proves the truth of it. Last Friday was one of the loveliest, brightest, sunniest days I have experienced during the days that have as yet passed of this present changeful year 1898. On Sunday morning we were actually weather-bound. All through the night a strong south-westerly wind brought up from the sea, not many miles away, a

thick, drizzling sea mist, now and again breaking out into heavy driving rain.

I am getting ahead of my story, for I might have said that not only was Friday a lovely day, but it was not altogether an uninteresting day for fishing. When our trout do condescend to rise, we have already found out that it is between the hours of eleven and one, and it was between those hours that I got a fine trout and a brace of grayling. These grayling, which, with their bluish-purple sheen, can be seen in pairs on the gravel beds, the one dark and the other fair, are always only too ready to make a dash at a floating fly.

It is a nuisance to catch them, although they give lively sport enough; but the trouble and damage to their constitution, in getting the hook out of their mouths in order to return them to the water, more than counterbalance the sport of catching them. It is quite amusing to watch a pair of these amatory thymy shadows ogling each other down in the water, billing and cooing like a pair of turtle doves.

The Major caught a brace of trout and several troublesome grayling; the largest trout was about $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb., and by this trout there hangs a tale.

When I was fishing in the same meadow last June I lost many a trout and many a May Fly; now it so happens that in the gill of this trout was found, firmly hooked, a very perfect May Fly—the G.O.M.—with six inches of gut. He has worn and no doubt been very proud of this distinctive decoration

ever since. It seems to me to be a very remarkable thing that fly and hook should have been in that fish for more than nine months, and now as perfect and fresh as if it had been in my pocket-book all the time ; the gut is rather rotten. The gold tinsel round the body is as bright as ever it was, one wing is slightly mangled, as if other envious trout had tried to nibble it. I fully believe that fly is mine, that I lost that fish on that particular spot last June ; the only doubt I have about it is that I then estimated the fish I lost as at least $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb., whereas this one, after nine months' growth, now weighs only $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb. ; on the other hand, you know how much larger are always the fish you lose than those you take ! The fly is distinctly a G.O.M. of Mrs Ogden Smith's make.

Saturday, April 9, I may fairly call hurricane day. Fly fishing, dry or wet, was hopeless, and to have attempted to cast a fly over the billows quite useless, because—firstly, it could not be done with any degree of accuracy ; and, secondly, because there was nothing over which to cast.

We had too jauntily concluded, because many months ago our nets had captured a large number of big pike and little jack, that we had cleared the river of these destructive pests ; but we ought to have remembered that what were mighty little jack then, and so escaped the net, have been all the while growing, till now they have become fair-sized pike.

"This windy weather," said "Piscator," "is just

the right sort for pike fishing. Suppose we have a go at them." "All right," said I, but I had no pike tackle or pike rod, or, for the matter of that, knowledge how to use them if they had been in my possession. I did, indeed, make one attempt to cast from the Nottingham reel, and a nice fizzle I made of it. It looks uncommonly easy in the hands of the Major.

The Major was but ill provided, but he had a good stiff pike rod and an artificial bait or two. We started, I carrying a walking-stick. The Red Phantom soon began to attract attention; the first that came was a small jack, and he quickly came to grief—then another, and, at length, spinning up quietly under the bank on which we stood, dash comes out what seems to me a monster, but, of course, a mere babe, when thought of in connection with Mr Jardine's 37-pounders. He struggled with all the vigour and power of a fellow quite aware that for him it is either death or victory. He came in to bank at last; but our small net was no good, we couldn't get even his head into it, so I lifted him out bodily on to grass. "Ten pounds," cried I. "Seven pounds," said the Major.

"Shall I take him home and weigh him?" says our bright boy. Off he went, and presently came back with the report that he only weighed 6 lbs. And so we piked on with more or less success till we came down to our aquatic mansion, which is at the limit of our tether; there is a profound, if not bottomless depth of water; there our big trout

lie, and there also lurk, and always have lurked, a big pike or two under the shadow of the now leafless oak which spreads itself partly over our house and partly over the water. There the Major, sure of a fine run, made a long cast, the Red Phantom spun through the air, but never again will it spin through the water! Yonder it hangs, suspended on the topmost branch of that old oak, and there it will hang and spin for ever.

And so home to lunch. Afterwards the Major rigged up another and a smaller bait, which proved no lure at all. He thought he had cleared the river. I followed as a spectator for an hour or two, but there is not much interest in such sport, so I gave it up. No sooner had I departed than he fitted up a rough old spoon-bait, and brought home five large jack, so making eleven of this interesting pike species out of our fancied immaculate stream. If eleven could be caught in a few hours' fishing with imperfect tackle, how many scores more must there be lurking about in holes and corners and carrier inlets. They must be looked after. This finished our Saturday's work. Sunday, as I have said, proved to be altogether terrible in the morning, but the sun came out in the afternoon, and it was not unpleasant for a stroll in a still high wind.

Easter Monday. — "Heigho! for the wind and the rain!"

No rain in the morning, nor, in fact, till about four o'clock. I said the Red Phantom which had

spun out so many jack would spin on in the top of the old oak for ever ; but the Major was of a different opinion. For want of a better lure, he ingeniously fastened two corks together and cut them into a shapely minnow. He then peeled off the gold leaf from the neck of a champagne bottle ; this he gummed neatly round the cork, and varnished it. Here was as glittering a gold fish as ever swam in a glass bowl. To this he added a strip of red stuff and affixed the tackle, and the gold spinner was perfect. Necessity is the mother of invention. Fly fishing on Easter Monday in a sou'-westerly gale is not attractive, so he sallied forth with his new impromptu invention, and caught three jack before lunch. I followed after with my rod and my flies, but really it was a disheartening task. I never saw a rise from one end of the water to the other, and I said I would not come here again on Easter Monday. After lunch, not feeling inclined to give in, I put on a small Coachman, after failing to attract any attention with Olive Dun and various other flies. It is pain and grief to a dry-fly fisherman to wander along by the waterside in a howling wind, and to see absolutely nothing over which to cast ; and it so happens that a south-westerly wind, when it is blowing half a gale, is almost the worst wind we can have on our side of the water, for it is only at certain corners and twists and turns in the river that one can have even a decent chance, though I can manage to get through a

stiffish wind when I see any encouragement under the opposite bank. And so I sauntered on down to *the pub.*—that place affords a somewhat sheltered corner—and there, knowing where a good trout or two must certainly lie, whether on the feed or not, I cast my Coachman over the spot, and to my surprise, I may say my delight, a nice trout came at me, and he came to grass. I threw again. This time I allowed the fly to float down under a barbed wire that crosses the stream (the Professor knows it well), and there, two or three yards below, one of those big fellows he wots of came at me. I hooked him nicely, and I had to treat him very gingerly, for it is no joke fishing under barbed wire and dead against stream. He fought like a true British trout (a rainbow trout couldn't have fought better), and I gently manœuvred him up-stream for a long distance in fear and trembling, for my boy was miles away with my landing-net, peddling about among pink in a carrier, never dreaming that I should do such an unlikely thing as get hold of a fish. I had to get him to a gravelly opening. All held well; and he came to grief, and to basket. He weighed a pound and a half. Remembering my former ill-luck, with which I had become slightly depressed, I need not say I was now slightly elated. I fished on lower down, and presently I caught another trout nearly a pound. Then I heard "the band play" in the village, two miles off, for the Easter festivities were in full swing there, and then

the rain came down in torrents, and I sought shelter in the hut. I pitied the Easterlings. Meanwhile the Major had not been idle. His golden spinner worked admirably, but it did not attract like that old Phantom swinging on the top of the oak tree. He longed for that destructive machine, and he was determined to have it. Our good friend the farmer carried down a light ladder, and between them they managed, by the help of the rod, to break the branch, and down came the Phantom, and, of course, sank at once into six feet of water. "Now," said I, "although your Phantom was not doomed to be hanged after all, he certainly was to be drowned;" but the Major was not to be so done. From his perch up in the tree he could see the glittering Phantom deep down in the water, so he determined to fish for him. With his rod up in the tree he let down the well-weighted Golden Miracle, and by skilful angling caught hold of the little branch in which the Phantom was fixed, and hauled it up triumphantly. That Phantom pike slayer has more work to do yet.

The rain was still pouring, or, rather, driving before the gale. I went home, and left them to further devices.

An hour or two later the Major turned up with a 6-pounder and two smaller pike, making in all seventeen of these destructive brutes for two days' work.

Easter Tuesday.—If a south-westerly gale is bad

for our water, a north-westerly is worse. It finds its way into every nook and corner ; it is impossible to get away from it. This being my last day, I made a final effort to get a fly on the water, but up to lunch time nothing came of it. Fishermen cannot control the weather ; they must take it as it comes, and always look for better luck next time. I do not complain ; far from it. I came here with a bad cold, and now I am quite well, and equal to any exertion befitting one of the ancients.

It seems but yesterday, and yet it must be ten or twelve years since our old friend, the doctor, first drove me and the Major over to this river. Ah ! what a pleasant time we had here in those days. What a sumptuous luncheon he used to provide for us in the *dulce domum* under the blooming may tree ; what jokes he used to crack ; he had long since retired from active practice, but he used to call on his way here from Southampton on several of his old patients, just to cheer them with his genial presence ; his pockets were usually crammed with sweets, and every child on the road knew him, and looked out for a pat on the cheek and a lump of barley-sugar.

The Major finished up his Easter fishing with seven more pike, all lured by that wonderful battered old Red Phantom.



CHAPTER II

THE KODAK FOR ANGLERS

THE Kodak, which has become so very popular of late, is a pleasant little weapon for an angler to put into his holster—with it he can constantly take shots which will be interesting reminders.

In this way the Major got about two dozen of such objects as presented themselves—most of them very sharp and perfect representations of bits of river, meadow, and woodland scenery, or objects about the farm. I am enabled to give a few specimens here, not because they are in themselves of any particular interest, only as showing what this beautiful little instrument is capable of producing.

Sorry I am that we did not *Kodak* the Major when he was up that tree angling for his "Phantom" in that upper branch, and then fishing for it from the same position in the deep water over which he was suspended.

There on the seat beneath "the May" is the Major, resting after his successful climb.* Here is a picture of the G.O.M. May Fly imitation, after it had been worn in the gill of a trout for over

* See Frontispiece.

nine months, as described in the last chapter. Of course there is no particular novelty in finding a fly in a trout's mouth ; but it is somewhat of a novelty to be able to identify the fly, and also to find it in such a perfect state of preservation after so long a time of wear and tear.



This does not confirm Charles Cotton's experience, who says :

"But I am very confident a trout will not be troubled two hours with any hook that has so much as one handful of line behind with it, if it be in any part of his mouth only ; * nay, I do certainly know that a trout, so soon as ever he feels himself pricked, if he carries away the hook, goes immediately to the bottom, and will there root, like a hog, upon the gravel, till he either rub out or break the hook in the middle."

This was written almost two hundred and fifty years ago.

Another example of the work of an idle moment, when the weather was cold and windy, and the Kodak came into action. The old man on the bridge looks as though he were waiting for a rise ; he was, in fact, admiring the grayling at play on the gravelly bed of the stream.

* Mine was fixed outside the gill.



Photo. by

THE OLD BRIDGE, RIVER ITCHEN.—p. 12.

Piscator Major.





CHAPTER III

ANGLING THAT "PREACHETH PATIENCE"

June 1898

ONCE a year our housemaid assumes dominion over our entire household: when she opens her mouth no dog is allowed to bark. We have to pack up and be off. *Spring-cleaning* is on—stair-carpetts are torn up; bedrooms made quite uninhabitable.

Once I tried to live through it at home all alone, the rest of the family being at the sea, but I don't want to try it again. I resolved for the future to leave spring-cleaning to itself, so this year, in the first week in May, we started off for the Isle of Wight.

I am now writing in the middle of June, on a bitterly cold day, without a fire—a north-easterly wind prevailing, as it has done for some days—and I find it difficult to realise now that five weeks ago we had some bright and shiny days of lovely summer weather.

We had many long strolls and drives in the pleasant interior of the lovely island—where the trees were all just out in full leaf—the meadows were green with lush grass, and golden with yellow buttercups—and the hedgerows were gilded over with solid beds of gorse and broom in full bloom—and as to the birds, they were positively rampant with their songs.

" . . . At the bent spray edge
That's the wise thrush, he sings each song twice over
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture."—BROWNING.

These were our early days — the nearer we approached the month of June the nearer winter we seemed to be getting—the days and nights grew colder and colder—and at length, when we left the island, we thought we had left summer quite behind us.

I remember one very hot, sunny afternoon, strolling along in a shady lane, I was surprised to see a leather-bat dashing about close to my head, and catching insects in the air. Never before have I seen one of these little night bats out in the sun in this way.

After many pleasant bright days spent on the island, I crossed the Solent, and found myself on the Itchen. The weather had changed. It was the last week in May, and I fondly hoped the May Fly would be good enough to come up during my stay. On the last two or three days I saw two or three, and that was all. There was no rise of fish,

as I suppose there seldom is before the great hatch comes on. I had the smallest possible success, wind and weather were against me. The big trout were down amongst the larvæ, with their tails wagging out of the water. I left on the 30th, and the next day and the following week they were up, and the Major and the Professor were there—and a fine time they had of it. Their friends all round the country lived upon Itchen trout all through the week. On the whole it proved to be as prolific a May Fly season, both in rise of insect and rise of trout, as they had experienced for some years. But I was not there to see it.

Friday, June 24.—Arrived at my old quarters on the Itchen, two o'clock. A very disappointing day. I came here to fish, and I find a March wind blowing, and at intervals driving rain—not a bit like the June that the poets sing about. Swallows seem to be astonished at such rude weather; they can hardly breast the storm; the birds are not singing as they ought to be, and it looks discouraging. I had lunch, and waited indoors for two hours, cogitating on the ill-luck which so frequently accompanies my infrequent outings; then I put on my togs, and away to the river. No rise—no fly—for two hours. I saw only six rises, but I brought two brace of fine grayling to bank and lost one. I am satisfied.

Our water is too full of grayling, so I make no scruple now about bagging them, for they are really in fine condition, and they want thinning.

The Major and the Professor played the deuce with the trout in the May Fly time, when, alas ! I was not here. Now, I fancy what few they left are very shy ; at all events, I did not see a single rise, and the Red Tag does not attract them as it does the grayling.

Saturday, June 25.—A boisterous morning, worse than yesterday ; torrents of rain, intermittent sunshine, strong westerly wind. I went down to the river ; water covered with floating islands of weeds. I was not a bit down-hearted. I got what enjoyment I could out of winds and weeds, and an occasional shower. My young gillie found infinite amusement in shooting in the air at the swallows a small white seed, which he called *darry* (and was careful to tell me how to spell it), out of a hollow hemlock stem, not for the purpose of hitting them, but to watch them darting after the seed and enjoying the fun. Then he told me he had seen a bird the other day that he had never seen before all his life. It had a yellow head and perfectly white wings and body ; it had a grub in its mouth, and he searched diligently in the hedge-row, but could not find its nest. I suggested that he must have mistaken it for a yellow-hammer, but he spurned the idea, as if he did not know a *yellow-hammer*.

Then he became enthusiastic about a *circus*—the biggest circus that ever was seen. It is coming on Monday, and costs sixpence entrance ; but he can get in for *threepence*. He had seen the pictures

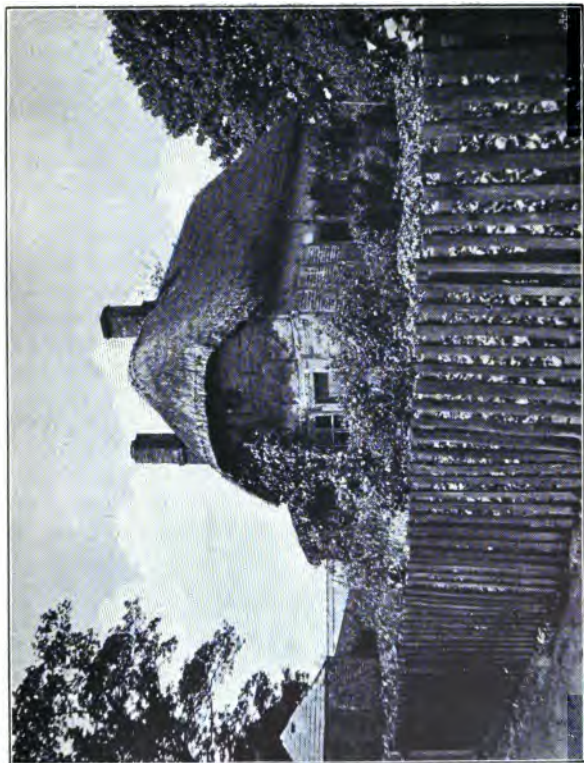


Photo. by

COTTAGE NEAR THE ITCHEN.—*p.* 16.

Piscator Major.

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on the walls ; they were *stunning*. And so we passed the time till lunch. At that time I expect the Major. By then I indulge the hope that the wind will have whistled itself away—that those demons up above will have ceased cutting weeds. They must know I am here ; but if they think they are disturbing my equanimity they are mistaken—I rather like it ! My good hostess—always very indulgent to me—insists on my having a fire, and so, in my comfortable arm-chair, I will read myself to sleep, lulled thereto by the howling, wintry wind outside.

The afternoon proved no better for angling purposes, for the river was still green with fresh-cut weeds. After much labour and intricate casting whenever we could see a rise in spaces between the floating weeds, we only got two brace—equally divided between us—and so we finished the week.

Sunday.—A *dies non* as to fishing, alternated between heavy rain and bright sunshine, thunder and lightning.

Monday morning.—Gloomy and dull, north-easterly wind blowing down-stream ; water whitish, being thick with chalk from heavy rains above. Of course there was no rise. The Major gave it up at once, and went home for his pike rod. I sat under the *pub.* tree, and rejoiced over my luck. Weeds on Saturday ; chalk soup on Monday. Swallows, skimming in pursuit of an imperceptible insect, left nothing to tempt a fish to rise. It is simply delightful sitting here, watching

and waiting. If the swallows would go away for a little while, the trout may have a chance of seeing through the foggy water something to come up for. Mark Tapley's philosophy is nothing to mine. Keeper, going by on the other side, shouts, "There'll be no rise, sir, till about seven or eight o'clock; water too much like skim milk."

Yes! What's the odds? At eight o'clock I shall be making tracks for the metropolis. It is rather cold sitting here in face of a strongish north-easterly wind. By Jove! there's a rise. I am afraid it's only a little one; never mind, it looks hopeful; for exercise I will have a try for him. I have him; he is only $\frac{1}{2}$ lb., so I put him back to increase in bulk—by next June he will be a fine young fellow. Heigho! See yonder clouds as black as midnight coming up with the wind. A few big drops, and then a downpour. We are caught in the open, and have to run for the nearest hedgerow. How delightful it is to crouch under a hedge, the wind driving the rain straight through, and wetting you as much as in the open.

The hopes of the morning were not verified. We reached home in another heavy thunderstorm, with the impression on our minds that we will not face wind and storm again this outing.

I may say, as indeed can easily be imagined, we thoroughly enjoyed our bit of a holiday. Of angling it may be truly said, as George Herbert said of a dull sermon—

"It preacheth patience."



Piscator Major:

ON THE ITCHEN. — *p.* 18.





CHAPTER IV

KINGFISHERS, SCARCITY OF

KINGFISHERS are said to be growing more and more scarce everywhere. This is partly owing to the fact that they have the credit of being destructive enemies of young trout ; the fact is, they do feed on little fishes, but not so much on trout as on minnows, dace, sticklebacks, miller's thumbs, and even leeches. Last-springs, as they call young salmon on the Wye, also afford them a dainty meal now and then, and the consequence of this is that they find deadly enemies in the water-bailiff and gamekeeper. The brilliant plumage of this interesting bird is also a fertile cause of its destruction, for it is frequently killed for the adornment of ladies' hats ; it also forms a pretty object when stuffed in a glass case ; and anglers themselves find an additional excuse for its slaughter, in that it furnishes them with feathers wherewith to make their daintiest flies.

I have seen one occasionally on our water, flitting, or, rather, flashing, down the stream. It

rarely happens that one can get a good view of him on account of his extreme shyness and extreme swiftness on the wing. I was fortunate one day in seeing him swinging on a spray close to the water in a most inaccessible place, warbling a pretty little melody; at a distance of nearly one hundred yards he sang away, seemingly quite secure from any intruder, and I thought of the pity of it that such a lovely little bird should be doomed to extinction partly on account of its having wrongly got a bad character, and partly because of its attractiveness.

Montaigne, in one of his delightful essays on the sagacity of animals, has the following remarks about the kingfisher—

“But that which experience teacheth seafaring men, especially those that come into the seas of *Sicilie*, of the qualitie and condition of the Halcyon bird, or, as some call it, *alcedo* or kingfisher, exceeds all men’s conceit. In what kinde of creature did ever nature so much prefer both their hatching, sitting, brooding, and birth?

“But God’s decree hath been that all the watrie wildernesses should be quiet and made calme, without raine, wind or tempest, during the time the *Halcyon* sitteth and bringeth forth her young ones, which is much about the winter *Solstitium*, and shortest day in the yeare: By whose privilege even in the hart and deadeest time of winter we have seven calme daies, and as many nights to saile without any

danger. Their Hens know no other Cocke but their owne: They never forsake him all the daies of their life: and if the Cocke chance to be weake and crazed, the Hen will take him upon her neck, and carrie him with her, wheresoever she goeth, and serve him even untill death. Man's wit could never yet attaine to the full knowledge of that admirable kinde of building or structure which the *Halcion* useth in contriving of her neast, no, nor devise what it is of.

"*Plutarke*, who hath seen and handled many of them, thinkes it to be made of certaine fish-bones, which she so compacts and conjoyneth together, enterlacing some long, and some cross-waies, adding some foldings and roundings to it, that in the end she frameth a round kind of vessel, readie to floate and swime upon the water; which done, she carrieth the same where the sea waves beat most; there the sea, gently beating upon it, shewes her how to daube and patch up the parts not well closed, and how to strengthen those places, and fasten those ribs, that are not fast, but stir with the sea waves; and on the other side that which is closely wrought, the sea beating on it, doth so fasten and conjoyne together, that nothing, no, not stone or yron, can any way loosen, divide, or break the same, except with great violence; and what is most to be wondered at is the proportion and figure of the concavities within: for, it is so composed and proportioned, that it can receive or admit no manner of thing, but the bird that built it: for to all things

else, it is so impenetrable, close and hard, that nothing can possible enter in ; no, not so much as the sea water."

I have never seen a kingfisher's nest, but the foregoing remarks evidently apply to the larger species—a sea-going bird specially found on the Sicilian coast—and this is, of course, the legendary bird about which so much classic and poetic lore clusters.

The smaller bird, familiar to all anglers on our rivers, builds its nest in the bank in a hole dug out by itself, and it is generally found to be lined with fish-bones, and becomes very offensive by the time the young ones are fledged. It has been stated that they nest in old rat-holes, but I fancy this bird is too independent and ingenious not to be able to make a nest for itself. Dr Bull, describing a nest found by himself, says—

"The hole here was in a perpendicular bank, six feet above the ordinary water-level. The entrance was oval in shape, two inches and three-quarters perpendicularly, and two inches and a half in its horizontal diameter. It was placed about a foot below the surface, was two feet in length, and inclined upwards to within two inches of the surface. Here a wide space, some six inches in diameter, was hollowed out for the nest of fish-bones. . . . The nest of a kingfisher is often discovered by a dog scenting its 'ancient fish-like smell' through the soil."



CHAPTER V

ON THE ITHON, LLANDRINDOD WELLS

July 2, 1898

I MAY say that accident rather than pre-meditated design led me to spend my summer holidays at Llandrindod Wells, which, though strictly speaking in South Wales, may be said to be in Mid-Wales—in Radnorshire.

An old adage, quoted in the guide-book, says—

“There’s neither park nor deer in Radnorshire,
Nor a man worth five hundred a year,
Except Sir William Fowler of Abbey Cwmhir.”

I remember an old farmer quoting it, some sixty years ago, rather differently—

“There’s never a park and never a deer,
And never a squire in Radnorshire,
But old Squire Rogers of Abbey Cwmhir.”

I do not think that either adage applies to the Radnorshire of to-day. I may add that Abbey Cwmhir is a small ruin, on one side of which is a pretty lake, formed by the river Clewedog, where,

doubtless, the monks of old, as was their custom, fished and fed upon carp, and possibly that prolific demon fish, the chub—the cooking of which is now a lost art. The ruins, and the beautiful church, and the mansion, are all situated in a most lovely nook, surrounded by mountains of great height. It is nine miles from Llandrindod—a very charming drive.

I did not come here with the view of drinking waters. I expected to find an old-fashioned village among the mountains. I found a small town of newly-built houses, mostly of red brick or stone, all seemingly on the latest principles of sanitation, and lighted with electric light—a town quite up to date, only wanting a *steam roller* to complete its perfection. The streets, when I was there, were stoutly carpeted with broken limestone, which were bad for tender feet. I am not going to describe the place in any detail. I can only say that I was equally surprised and charmed with this delightful *oasis* among the hills. The varied scenery is lovely. One of the inducements to come here was the certainty of having pleasant rambles by rivers, whether fish were to be caught or not.

“Lord, who would live turmoiled in the Court,
And may enjoy such quiet walks as these?”

King Henry VI.

Our first little excursion took us all along a rugged road to have a first look at the Ithon, about three miles away to the Shaky Bridge. This is a very curious structure—a bridge of wooden planks laid



By permission of

the Misses Ross, Llandrindod Wells.

SHAKY BRIDGE, ON THE ITHON.—p. 24

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crosswise on two strong chains on the river ; visitors are cautioned that not more than three persons should go on it at one time. It wobbles about in an alarming way as one crosses, but there is nothing to be afraid of. I suppose it has wobbled in this way for many generations, with an occasional patch up, and people think it will go on wobbling for ever. Frisky young fellows are much given to jump on it in the middle, and so enjoy the screams of their lady friends. The experiment is dangerous.

What a delightfully pretty spot it is ! The river winds round in a semi-circle beneath wooded heights, not unlike, in a smaller way, the Thames at Clieveden. On the other side, at a meadow's breadth, rises a conical rocky hill to a considerable height, called Cefyn-Llys, or the Court House Hill ; supposed remains of a British fortress. I and my daughter went there to look at it from an angler's standpoint. It was on a lovely summer evening, and the fish were beginning to rise freely. There it was that I first wet my line in the waters of the pleasant but alder-bound Ithon. Unluckily, I could not stay long enough. I fished for half-an-hour, and got a brace of small trout ; then we had to trudge back over the hills and through woods. It is a lovely, secluded spot, and I hope to pay it another visit.

In the morning we had driven over to Builth, about seven miles, through very picturesque scenery, just to have a look at the Wye. It is a grand stream there ; but, as I was told by an in-

telligent fishing-tackle maker near the bridge, it was not in good order for fishing, owing to its peaty colour and flavour, inimical to fish. "Come here," said he, "in April or September, and I will promise you some good sport." So I gave up the idea of fishing in the Wye.

The next day, Tuesday, July 6, fine, bright morning; fogs or mists are said to be unknown here. Llandrindod is seven hundred feet above the sea; it stands on an elevated plateau, and all round in the distance the horizon is outlined by the irregular tops of mountains. I went down to the river. There was a fair rise, but I could not get at the fish—lost three good flies in the bushes, and got one good trout, nearly 1 lb., and two smaller ones.

The next day I started off for the river below Lovers' Leap (so called, I understand, on account of the tragic end of two young lovers, who fell from the slippery rocks above into the pool below, and were drowned), a prominent rock, beneath which is a very deep salmon pool. I found the river running in a deep bed, from ten feet to twenty feet below the level of the meadow, and the same characteristics of perpetual alders, with very few open spaces for casting. Two meadows down I came upon a high wooded precipice, over which I had to climb with endless troubles. This brought me at length down into a secluded glen, a little paradise of solitude, only enlivened by the shrill musical note of a curlew, a big brown bird with a

long curved beak, larger than a pigeon or peewit. I had never seen a curlew before. I was charmed by the silver bell-like clearness of its note as it flew over my head within easy gunshot, and it evidently regarded me as an impertinent intruder upon its lovely solitude.

"Round his grey head the wild curlew
In many a fearless circle flew."—*Lord of the Isles*.

It has a variety of thrilling notes, but always as it winged over my head the cry was *coo-loo, coo-loo*, which I properly interpreted to say, "Go away, go away, you ugly, featherless, two-legged thing." Then it would alight on the topmost branch of a tall tree in the distance, and continue its scolding in singularly clear and unmistakable language. Its note could be heard at an immense distance, and it kept up its scolding, like the barking of a dog, till I disappeared round the corner of the rock up the river. I had found that this lovely meadow, alder-bound as it was, was quite impracticable for fishing. I managed, with the greatest difficulty, to get along by the water's edge, which there ran shallow over rocks and shingle, under the rocky hill which I had previously so laboriously climbed over. The one experience was as bad as the other.

I was enchanted with all that I had seen, but, as to fishing, I caught nothing but very small trout, and one big one, as I fondly believed, till he came into my net, when he proved to be a lovely chub !

I can only say he gave as much sport as a trout of the same size.

It certainly has a tendency to disturb your equanimity when you fancy you have got hold of a big trout to find that you have a chub. Following Izaak Walton's advice when "Venator" had a similar grievance, I did not hang him up on a "Willow twig"; I took him home, and requested my good landlady to give him away with my blessing.

It is also a further disturbance to one's complacency to see big chub, 3 lbs. or 4 lbs. weight, floating about a-top of the water in almost every inaccessible place. No wonder this river is full of chub, they told me that it is constantly poached by netting. The poachers keep the trout and throw back the chub! A little legitimate netting by the riparian owners, reversing the foregoing order of things by keeping the chub and putting back the trout, would be a public benefit.

Chub afford good sport, if but indifferent eating, and as they roam about like thieves all over the deep pools, one can catch them more easily than the lordly trout. I fancy they drive the trout out of such places. At all events, it is difficult to get at any decent-sized trout.

Doubtless wading could be profitably done here and there, but I had no waders with me; there are many whole meadows' length where, owing to depth of water, even wading could not be adopted. I reached home tired and footsore, but quite conscious that I had gained pleasant experience.

July 8.—Notwithstanding my ill-luck yesterday, I am as full of energy this morning as ever. I find it impossible to lounge about on benches in the sun and drink *pump-house* water all day—as most of the folk seem to do here. I must be doing something, and surely angling is as innocent and pleasant a diversion as has ever been found for “the contemplative man’s recreation.” So away I started for another part of the river. I began at the Crabtree Green Bridge, and fished two or three meadows up under similar circumstances to those I have already mentioned; the river still runs deep, deep down away from the meadow’s edge, and still the everlasting alders bar the way. There are places here and there where you can get down about six feet on to an irregular ledge, which sometimes gives you a little gravel space. It was down such a place as this that I managed to get a nice brace of trout, and hooked and lost several more. Ah! the tumbles and scratches and escapes I had up and down those terrible banks! Sometimes getting along a sort of under-cliff for one hundred yards, and then coming suddenly on a quagmire, which plainly said: “Go back, or I’ll swallow you.”

Returning homewards

“As one who long in thickets and in brakes
Entangled, winds now this way and now that,”

I had to scramble through a wood on a path overgrown with brambles and briars. I was bitten by

dun flies—an awful pest—I was stung by nettles, pricked by standard tall thistles, which must be gone through—thistles, I mean, such as the Wye farmer used to climb up every morning to look for his cattle. My hands were scratched all over with thorns, and I finally emerged into a field which had no stile and no gate, and, as far as I could discover, was entirely surrounded by treble rows of barbed wire. I did force myself over this accursed fence somehow, but not without scratches and tearings, and very bad language.

July 9.—Early to bed and early to rise is the rule here, so I rose early and took my walk with scores of others up to the Pump-room, which is hidden away from the town, about an eighth of a mile, behind a fine clump of trees.

In the middle of the grove I have generally found a band playing at seven o'clock A.M. At the pay-gate sixpence fee was demanded by the manager. I demurred, as I only wanted to taste by taking a single glass of saline. "One glass!" says he, "that will never do; you must drink deep or touch not this aperient spring. From five to seven or eight large tumblers of hot saline will be the proper thing, a single glass will only upset you and do no good."

You take, say, two large tumblers full of *saline*, and off you trot for a mile run round the beautiful lake, and then back for more tumblers till the full dole has been swallowed, then home to breakfast.

Invigorated thus by a few tumblers of this

cheerful liquid, I attacked the river again, for it has a curious fascination for me. I have not yet solved the geographical problem in its connection, for its winding ways round the town, and yet almost entirely invisible from any point, are not easily made clear to a stranger. I know a little better now. I thought I would begin this day's expedition by starting from Shaky Bridge and fish up to Alpine Bridge. Now, it appears to me that the Shaky Bridge may be taken as at the base of a pothook—thus, U—and Alpine Bridge is up one or the other of the sides.

Two young ladies accompanied me, and when we reached the bridge we remembered we had forgotten to inquire whether we should go up-stream or down-stream. Judging by a rough map I had, I decided for *up*-stream; so we took the right stem of the pothook, and off we went, fishing now and then without any success, but mostly occupied in finding and fighting our way to Alpine Bridge, through woods impenetrable, over fences purposely made by the farmer as thorny and difficult as possible, climbing up rocky banks, and having a general scramble for more than two miles up-stream, when, to our delight, one of us descried in the distance a wooden bridge. Alpine Bridge at last, we cried, for we had struggled along in a blazing sun, scratched, torn, and footsore. We found it to be a handsome wooden structure, spanning the wide river, and underneath the bridge we looked down, as we passed over, on

the broad backs of a score of beautiful Hereford cows, finding shelter from the fierce sun under the bridge, placidly chewing the cud, and lashing their sides with their tails to swish off myriads of flies, particularly that abominable *dun fly*, and the *bree*, which sticks to them like a leech and sometimes drives them almost mad.

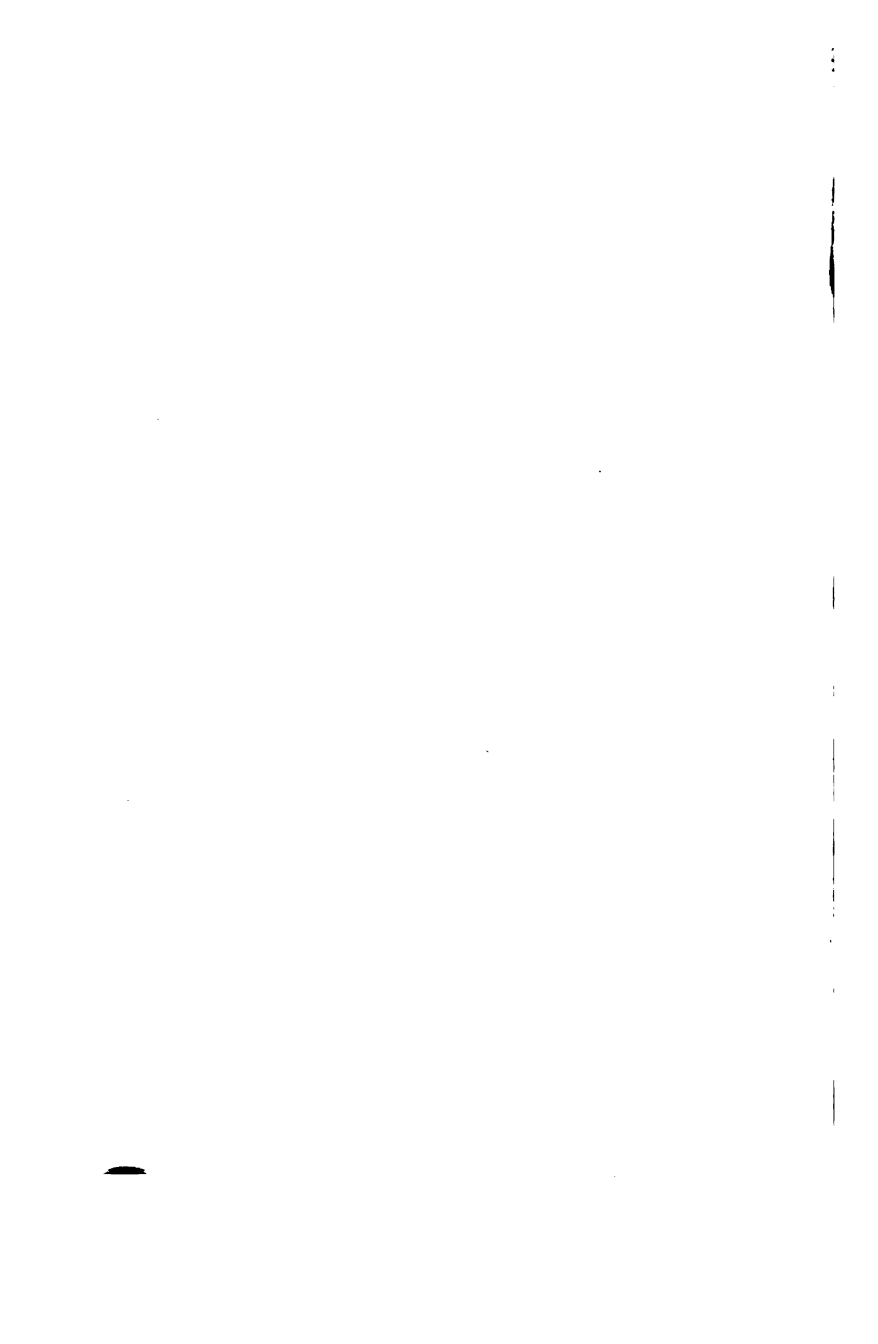
We expected to be met here by a carriage to take us back home, but no carriage was here. We begged or bought some milk at a cottage, and then we learnt to our dismay that we had arrived, not at *Alpine Bridge*, but at the bridge of *Bryn Domas*! We had travelled two hard miles in the wrong direction. We ought to have gone up the left stem of the pothook in order to find Alpine Bridge. To retrace our steps by the river would have involved a five-mile walk, but striking across country over a wild common, from our point of the pothook at the top of the right stem, we struggled on "o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent," till we reached the old mill, where our carriage had been waiting for us for two hours. It was about two miles across, over a rough common and through pleasant meadows, where we again encountered the long-beaked, long-legged, silver-tongued curlew, scolding us in a way which haunts me still.

The Alpine Bridge is *down-stream* from Shaky Bridge, not up, though it is much farther from Llandrindod; we found it to be quite new; in fact, a carpenter was just putting down the last



Photo. by

T. Roberts, Llandrindod Wells.
ALPINE BRIDGE, ON THE ITHON.—*p. 32.*



planks—a good, substantial bridge crossing a most picturesque part of the river, replacing the ancient one.

I was too tired to fish, but on a subsequent visit I fished up from the Suspension Bridge to this romantic dell, on a bright day, when there was no hope of catching a fish; but I saw a rise in one of those pools below the bridge, and tried him with three flies successively. He would not look at my pretty Red Ant, nor my Cock-a-bondhu, but when I threw Yellow Dun his way he seized it greedily, and I thought I had him. A big trout he was (I fancy about 1 lb.), but he did not give me the pleasure of putting him in the scales. He broke away between two of those big boulders to be seen in the picture.

It is needless to remark that it is labour thrown away to fish in bright sunshine when the water is clear and low, and there is no sign of a rise. This is knowledge gained by the experience of this and many similar days; but what matters it! We did not come here solely to catch fish. We came here to be merry, and to revel in the sweet scenes around us, and we laughed at our misfortunes.

The fishermen's tracks by this river show what bold and determined men they are. There are many places where your only chance of getting on is to cling to the grass on the upper bank, and stick your toes in any crevice you can find in a ten-feet height of crumbling mould—if anything

gives way, down you go! I had more than one such a tumble, and one desperately risky piece of work for such an old customer as the "A. A." I saw footholds here and there worn in the banks by a succession of bold anglers, and some points of rock above; the descent was at least twenty-five feet, quite smooth but for these footholds, and all but perpendicular above a bed of rocks and gravel.

I made the attempt, rod in hand. I clung to the points of rock above my head till half-way across, when it was far more impossible to recede than to progress, a big block, to which I was clinging, to my horror, began to crumble under my pressure, and fell over me in great lumps. I felt myself going, and all but gone. My fishing rod had to go, and luckily I put my hand on a firm bit of stone. To this I clung with all my weight till I could get another foothold, and so I managed by the tips of my fingers and the tips of my toes to get across this horrid place and down to the waterside. The girls were alarmed, and, of course, they could not attempt to follow. By searching out, another long way round route was found for them. This is only a sketch of one of the many perils to which anglers on this lovely river are liable.

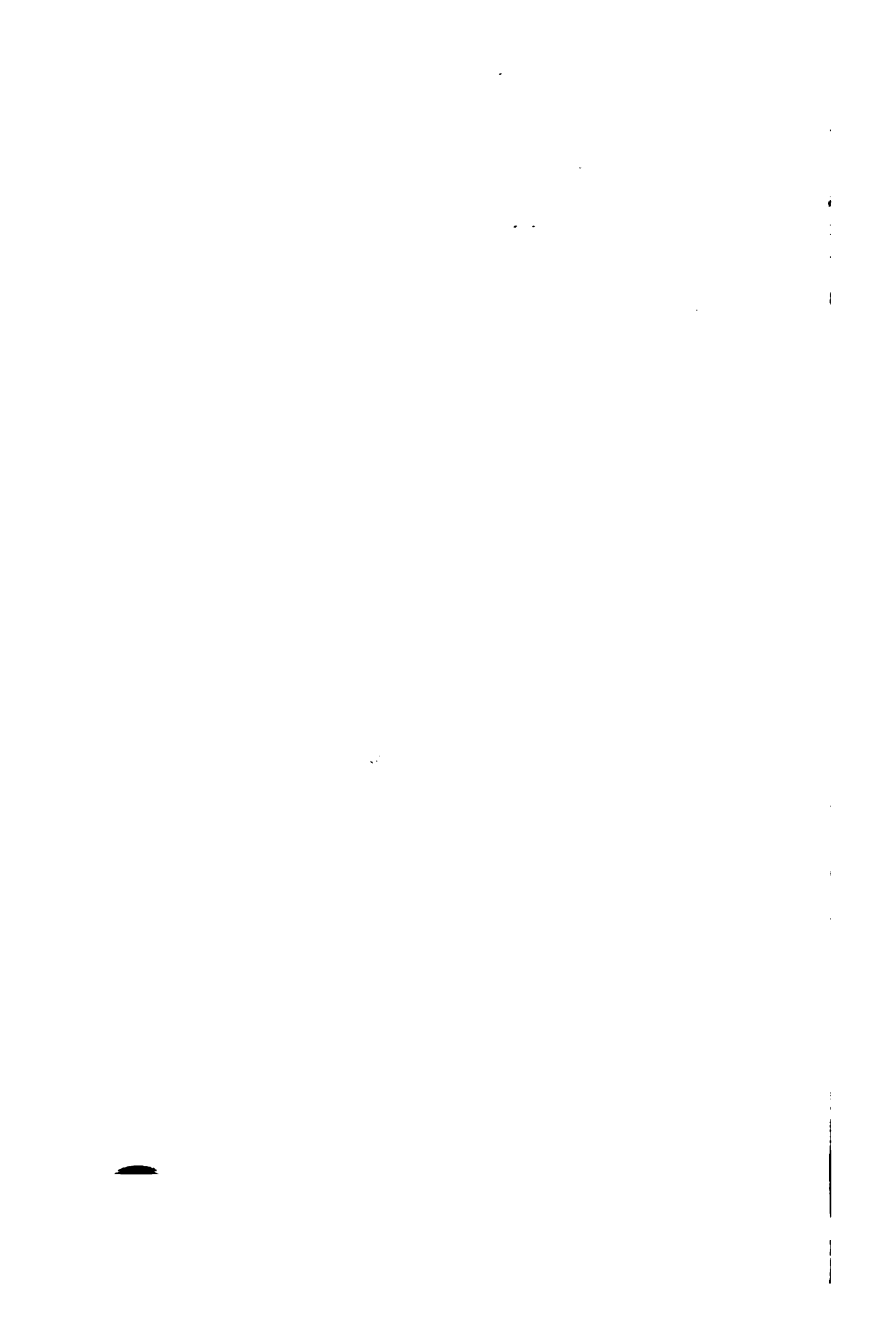




Photo. by

T. Roberts, Llandrindod Wells.

PONTYLFON BRIDGE, ELAN RIVER.—p. 34





CHAPTER VI

THE ELAN VALLEY AND THE BIRMINGHAM WATERWORKS

July 11, 1898

"With high woods the hills were crowa'd,
With tufts the valleys, and each fountain side ;
With borders long the rivers, that earth now seem'd like to Heaven."
—MILTON.

AS a pleasant diversion from angling, we accepted the advice of everybody that it would be a sin to leave the Principality without paying a visit to this wonderful valley. Accordingly we started on this lovely morning for a fifteen-mile drive up the valley of the Wye and through the town of Rhayader to the Elan Valley Hotel, at the foot of the works ; an enchanting drive it was, through scenery of romantic character. I am not going to say unequalled elsewhere, but I am going to say that it is sufficiently varied and romantic to make one feel that one's sense of the beautiful is satisfied at every turn of the road. Here and there we get glimpses of the Wye,

mostly hidden by fringes of alders ; sometimes pretty cascades falling over and among great boulders. It is now very low, but one can imagine the grandeur of the scene when a flood comes tearing down from the hills.

At Rhayader we part from the Wye and follow its important tributary, the Elan, up its lovely vale, so soon to be converted, higher up, into a series of enormous lakes or reservoirs for the supply to the good people of Birmingham of the purest water which these surrounding mountains can send down.

The Elan Valley Hotel is very charmingly situated, being surrounded on two sides by pine-clad hills, and on other sides by the valley below, and the works going on above.

Mr Williams, the proprietor of the hotel, was good enough to drive us up through the works, which extend for about six miles, and described to us many points of interest, which would otherwise have escaped our notice as strangers.

It would be folly for me to attempt to describe these works ; the great interest is to see this lovely picturesque valley, now in its summer beauty of rich verdure. Already this beauty is considerably marred by the enormous works going on. First passing along a splendid new road, which will eventually form the boundary of the lake, which will rise high up the sides of the hills, we come upon, down below us in the valley, a town of wooden houses, in one long street, built for the



T. Roberts, Llandrindod Wells,

CWM BLAN.—b. 36.

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accommodation of over two thousand workmen. Farther up we reach the first great dam, the foundations of which are now nearly complete ; our driver pointed out, on the other side of the valley, a charmingly situated mansion, now occupied by some of the engineers.

This house is called Cwm Elan, and possesses a double claim to be mentioned ; first, because, according to the guide-books, it was once the residence of Shelley the poet, in July 1811, after his expulsion from Oxford, and after the breaking of his engagement with his cousin, Miss Harriet Grove.

This is what Shelley says about this valley—

“The scenery is divine, grand rocks piled on each other to tremendous heights, rivers formed into cataracts by their projection, and valleys clothed with woods, present an appearance of enchantment.”

The grandeur of the scenery inspired the poet, and was a solace for the “overwhelming woe” which his matrimonial trials had caused him. Mr Dowden, in his *Life of Shelley*, published, for the first time in 1886, a poem which was written during the poet’s residence at Cwm Elan. I can only afford space for a few lines—

“The moonlight was my dearer day,
Then would I wander far away,
And, lingering on the wild brook’s shore,
To hear its unrelenting roar,
Would lose in the ideal flow
All sense of overwhelming woe ;

Or, at the noiseless noon of night,
Would climb some heathy mountain's height,
And listen to the mystic sound
That stole in fitful gusts around."

Its second claim to be honourably mentioned is, that pleasantly situated as it now is, it is inevitably doomed to be swallowed up by the all-devouring waters which will some day come down upon it, or, rather, rise up gradually and overwhelm it. Before reaching this point we come upon the church and churchyard, equally doomed. We looked down the chimneys of several cottages, and one could fancy what curious traps these chimneys will make for trout which may find their way into kitchens and parlours, and pantries down below, but may have a difficulty in finding their way up again.

I was informed that the ancient inhabitants of these cottages are quite bewildered, and cannot understand what is going on around them. Just like the old dwellers in the bottom of Lake Vyrnwy, they will not quit the ancient dwellings in which they were born till the waters rise up around them.

On the Elan river there are four dams in course of formation. There is another valley, Nantgwilt, I think it is called, down which the river Clearwen flows into the Elan, where three more dams are being erected.

Both Elan and Clearwen were formerly fine salmon and trout streams before these works began, but the two thousand workmen have now

taken full possession of them, and both rivers are netted and fished in every kind of unlawful manner ; of course it is impossible to prevent this being done.

The Birmingham Corporation probably take no interest in the fishing, and are powerless to prevent this. Seeing, however, that the men will inhabit this valley for many years yet to come, it is a pity that the corporation cannot induce them to adopt some close time, and other regulations, to prevent the absolute depletion of these streams, and so avoid killing the goose that lays for them these golden eggs. Netting should be entirely stopped.

These rivers are for miles the property of this great corporation, and if some preservative regulations were adopted by the men themselves, such as I have indicated, they would soon have fish in plenty, both for fly and bottom fishing. As it is at present they get scarcely any fish at all.

Certainly the Elan Valley Hotel is a place at which a few days may be spent with perfect enjoyment, if only to watch the marvellous engineering work now going on in the midst of these picturesque mountains and valleys.

July 12.—A dull morning, threatening rain, but none came. I attacked another part of the river, starting from Llanbadarn-Fawr Bridge—intending to fish down about two miles to Crabtree Green Bridge ; but I did not get so far. I laboured amidst the usual difficulties of water deep down, ten feet

or twenty feet below the meadows. There is, for a wonder, in a meadow joining the bridge, a considerable open space, and I should think, in proper season, some splendid chances ; but I found the river quite low and clear as gin—no fly and no rise. The flies come up in batches at certain times, and then there comes a rise ; but I rarely can hit the right time. Early in the morning and up to eleven o'clock is, I think, the best time ; after then it is all chance work. I caught a few small things and a brace of good fighting chub, and that was all. I spent three hours on the water, and then I had a three-mile walk home. I tried new short cuts, and found them very long ones. I got into a pathless wood, with the usual briars and thorns. There I saw flitting about from tree to tree, on soft, noiseless wings, a pair of tawny owls. They reminded me of boyish days in the woods, for I am sure I have not seen a brown owl for sixty years. The horned owl is, I am told, sometimes seen hereabouts.

Ah me ! The troubles, the labours, the real hard scrambling I have gone through this day, and all to catch a brace of chub ! It took me two weary hours to get over those three miles—tired and footsore, muddy and limping ; the wise people seemed to smile at the angling maniac as I shuffled along through the streets. I won't go a-fishing to-morrow ; I will lounge about on the common, and loll on seats, and do nothing all day, like other people.



By permission of

IN THE ELAN VALLEY.—p. 40.

Mr. J. Owen, Newtown.

I tried a variety of flies, but as none of them did much execution I cannot speak of their special killing qualities. Many of them adorn the alders fringing this terrible river. The Yellow Dun is evidently the fly now on the water, and a very prettily made Red Ant, by Miss Ellis, of Exmouth, certainly attracted many rises—too short to get hold. I may say that I lost a large number of fair trout through this way they have of coming short. This was the fly that caught my blooming chub!

Thursday, July 14.—I fished for an hour or two in the Rock House Hotel water at a cost of half-a-crown, and caught two chub! I had previously paid 10s. 6d. for six days.

The rector of the parish has the right over two miles of the most charming bit of the river, and to fish there his charge is only a shilling a day. Surely two miles are as good as seven for *one day's fishing*. There are also miles of this curiously winding river close at hand, as it were, where the fishing is quite free.

For anglers having no other ties, of course the Rock House Hotel is the place to go to: I am told by friends who have stayed there that it is most comfortable in every respect, and the charges are moderate. It is well situated for those who want to take the benefit of the waters in a double sense—for those who fish, the river is close at hand; for those who drink, the Park Pump-room is near by, where you can drink quarts of saline, or sulphur, or chalybeate, for a few pence a day.

The lake is a lovely sheet of water, picturesquely situated above the Pump House Hotel. It lies at the foot of a wood-clad hill, under which it stretches away nearly as far as the Old Church. It has a circumference of about a mile. The side adjoining the common is the fashionable and favourite promenade of those who drink the waters. There are a dozen swans on the water, and it is interesting to watch them on a bright summer evening, like

"The swan on still St Mary's Lake
Float double, swan and shadow,"

their portraits reversed in the water as clearly photographed, and developed as sharply as their individual shapes above it. There are also to be seen on this lake a number of coots, moorhens, and other water birds. The coots are comparatively tame.

It is curious to watch a pair of them floating about with three newly-hatched young ones, the old ones alternately turning somersaults into the water, and the chicks keeping a keen look-out for their reappearance ; sometimes the dive is a blank, and sometimes the swiftest swimmer gets a choice bit. The lake is abundantly stocked with perch, and young Waltonians (born to be great anglers) find abundant amusement, and sometimes make wonderful catches angling from the shore or from boats.

Judging by the present list of visitors, three-fourths of them appear to be Welsh, and it shows

what faith they have in the curative quality of the waters of Llandrindod Wells and the bracing purity of their native atmosphere. One hears Welsh spoken everywhere, and coming from the lips of charming young ladies and pretty children it certainly has a most musical and agreeable sound for unaccustomed ears.





CHAPTER VII

GRAYLING FISHING UNDER DIFFICULTIES

October 1898

THE persistent fine weather, at which it is about time to begin to grumble, has not, I fancy, been good for grayling fishing anywhere. It was during the sham war on Salisbury Plains that my good friend M. invited me to spend a day or two at Amesbury, first to witness the "grand review and march past," on Boscombe Down, Beacon Hill, on September 8, 1898, and then for some fishing on "The Avon."

We reached Porton, our nearest station, on the day of the great fight between the northern and southern armies, called "the Red" and "the Blue." We found the station a perfect impact; vehicles were there of every imaginable description, and a traction engine drawn diagonally across the road. The space in front of the station was full of hogsheads of beer, and these were being loaded on vans to which the engine was attached. If the ladder up which the casks were being rolled had

been lifted for two minutes we could all have got by easily, but the officer in charge said the British Army wanted its beer after the battle, and we must wait till all the casks were up—an hour's work at least. He kept us patiently waiting for half-an-hour, and then a glimmering of sense shot through his dull brain, and he did what he might just as well have done at first.

It certainly is not my intention to describe a battle I did not see ; all I can tell about it from personal observation is that as we drove across the down homeward we met many stragglers, foot-sore, weary, and sad-looking, covered with the white, chalky dust. Hungry and thirsty, they limped along under the hot sun, endeavouring to find their different encampments, spread over the plains and far apart, and doubtless anathematizing the commissariat for leaving them in such a sad plight. How eagerly those of them who were blessed with a few coppers bought the fruit that road vendors had to sell to them, and it was pleasant to see these rich British warriors distribute their purchases among those who had not the wherewithal to buy for themselves.

When we reached Amesbury we were glad of a wash and brush-up, and we welcomed the pleasant dinner that awaited us.

That night the constant rumble in the street beneath my bedroom kept me wide awake ; the heavy roll of traction engines, gun-carriages, and munitions of war, the shouts of men and the tramp

of cavalry on the hard road, banished sleep, and made night hideous for one who desired nothing so much as a little peaceful rest. Following these warriors and their equipments, as night was slowly banished by the rising sun, came a long, never-ending procession of 'country carts, broad-wheeled farm wagons, market carts, donkey carts, and all sorts of traps filled with men, women, and children, which must have emptied every village and hamlet for miles and miles away, and most of these vehicles, in their turn, blocked the way by stopping at the *pub.* next door to us, which seemed to have had a special licence to supply thirsty travellers all through the night. These were all on their way to Boscombe Down. They started early to secure good places to see the grand review and the march past, which was to be at eleven o'clock.

Mine host had fortunately secured a one-horse chaise long before the eventful day, so we were safe. A young gentleman and his wife, who had come all the way from Southampton, were not so lucky. We had pity on them; we found room for them in our wagonette, and they proved very pleasant companions. We crawled along in the long procession up the narrow lane which leads to Beacon Hill till we reached the open down, and then we hurried along over the soft turf to secure a place as near the flagstaff as possible. Our young friends enjoyed, we all enjoyed, the bountiful repast provided by my thoughtful host. We saw the march past, which has already been described

in every paper—a fine spectacle it was. As to the splendid gallop of the Guards, I shall only make one remark, and that not my own. A jolly, happy farmer, standing up with all his family in his wagon behind us, shouted as they shot past—

“Hurrah! That’s the style. I bet them chaps would like to *shift a booze* after that!”

To “shift a booze” somewhat tickled us, for none of us had ever heard it before, although it may be a common expression in Dorsetshire or Wiltshire.

We reached home about three o’clock, and as I engaged the same conveyance to take me to Salisbury next morning at nine o’clock, my only chance for a bit of fishing was this evening. I went to the river and landed a brace of nice grayling, and so home to bed—but not, alas! to sleep. No sooner there than I was seized with such a grip as I had never experienced before. What was the matter?

Was it the veal and ham pie; or the truffles with which it was garnished? Or was it the champagne? Or was it the scorching sun under which I had moderately partaken of these luxuries? Or was it wading above my knees in indiarubber boots to catch that brace of grayling? It matters not the cause, the effect was sudden and terrible. I rushed out of my room, and in the dark knocked at every door I could find to beg for a little brandy. At last a Good Samaritan arose, put on his clothes and came to my relief with a dose of

chloridine. My heartiest thanks are due to that good friend. Several doses during the night at last threw me into a sleep, from which I did not awake till twelve next day. My carriage had long since disappeared. I was due in London at one, and now there was no train from Salisbury till five o'clock, and no conveyance of any kind to carry me to Salisbury! In the nick of time, when I had despaired of getting off that day, our good friends of yesterday, hearing somehow of my trouble, drove up and found me a place in a trap, and we caught the train for London.

I am afraid I have dwelt too much on my personal disasters. Notwithstanding these, I am not the less grateful to my good friend for affording me the opportunity, recluse as I am usually, of seeing so much of life in so short a space of time. From subsequent experience among the deceitful grayling, I now regard my evening's catch of one brace as a marvel of success.

GRAYLING FISHING ON THE ITCHEN.

Three weeks later I ventured to run down to the Itchen for a few days. When I have been trout fishing there, a constant cause of complaint has been that the river swarmed with grayling, and grayling only could we catch when we wanted only trout. Now I find the river low, as I might have expected after the long drought, the deep holes stagnant and apparently lifeless, cut and

rotting weeds floating about everywhere, and you may pursue the river for a mile with never a sign that life existed below the surface.

It was in these hopeless circumstances that I reached my old quarters on Saturday, the 1st instant. There I found my good friend the Professor, who had already been there three days. He was delighted to see me, for he sadly wanted a companion in misfortune on whom he could expend his eloquence, and pour out the vials of his wrath against the elements which had conspired to prevent the possibility of his catching any grayling. "The river," he said, "my dear sir, wants oxidizing, it wants ozonizing, it wants stirring up into life; it is dead, and the fish in it are already half-poisoned, languid, lifeless. Catch a big grayling now and you will find him—not as he ought to be, plump and vigorous—you will find him limpid and sickly. There will be no fishing till we have had several days and nights of downpour of rain, so we may both of us as well pack up and go home, and come again after the rain." This was not encouraging, but it was prophetic.

As we were sitting that Saturday night, playing our last game of chess, between eleven and twelve, we heard a quiet lifting of the latch of the hall door, which, fortunately, was well barred. "Burglars," cried the Professor; "where's the poker?" Then came a gentle tapping at our window. We knew a burglar wouldn't do that, so we opened the door,

and in marched a young soldier. Full six feet he stood in his regimentals. I looked at him. "Why, Victor," said I, "can it be you? You, the little boy who, three years ago, used to carry my fishing-basket!" "Yes, sir," says he, "I am the same Victor, only a little longer." Then he told us that he had just come up from the training-ship at Portsmouth to say good-bye to his parents before going aboard the *Majestic* as a marine for a two years' trip about the world. He had leave only till the next day—Sunday evening. The good people in the house had all gone to bed long ago. Of course he knew his way about the old home well enough, and soon found a berth.

The next evening, before leaving, I saw him in the gloaming walking alone round the garden, now and then standing at a corner, looking over the pleasant fields, the farmhouse, the farm buildings, and the cottage over the way, and he reminded me of the old song, the soldier standing on the hill and taking

"A last fond look
Of the valley and the village church
And the cottage by the brook."

I called him in, and he came with a tear in his eye, for it was hard to part with the dear old home and all the pleasant associations of his childhood, his boyhood, and his early youth. He was well aware that in these perilous times and chances of war, and on board such a ship as the *Majestic*, he

may possibly never see the place again ; if a war breaks out the *Majestic* is pretty sure to be in the midst of it.

He was just now leaving the training-ship, where he had already obtained his corporal's stripe. I understand that he gave this up, and was going aboard the *Majestic* as an ordinary marine. He said he liked the life all but the *living*—but one gets used to it. At first he could not manage to make a meal of three inches of fat, and sometimes rancid, meat and sea-biscuits—but one has to live. He is only seventeen now, so he may yet add some inches to his six feet—a fine, handsome fellow, with the ruddy bloom of youth on his cheeks—a good honest countenance. He is only a boy—his poor mother says he is only a child, and she is broken-hearted at parting with him, but comforts herself with the reflection that he will only be thirty-seven when he will be free to quit the service and come home and be happy ever afterwards.

I had many a pleasant day with him at the waterside, and that is my excuse for so long a deviation from the subject of grayling fishing.

I had looked forward to this grayling season with pleasurable anticipations, which I confess have not been realized. I was there, and I decided to stay, always hoping that a change from hot sun and persistent cold easterly winds to something more genial would happen next day. I caught only one grayling of $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. and a few smaller ones. Red Tag, even Dr Brunton's Badger hackle, had

no attraction for them. A solitary rise once in an hour is not good enough to wait for with an easterly wind at your back and glaring sun in your face.

I changed my flies four times over one rising fish, which I hoped was a grayling, but I feared was a trout, from his position close under the opposite bank. At last I put on a light blue Silver Twist. He came at it at once, and I had him. He leaped a yard out of the water, and fought with more spirit than I had hoped for. He came into the net a good $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. trout; the envious Professor said he was only $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb.

It was October 8, I was reminded by the Professor. So, after all the skill, time, and patience I had bestowed on that lovely trout, I had to put him back into the river. A few hours afterwards I saw him again at the same old spot, rising as freely as if he had never had the toothache. We had no scales, so he could not be weighed before I gave him his grateful plunge. The Professor and I are still at loggerheads about his weight.

The Professor suggested that whenever by any unusual chance we saw a rise, we should toss up to decide which of us should have a go at him, but nothing came of it.

I now put by my fishing implements with but little hope of taking them up again for at least six months—and so, happy anglers, I bid you farewell!



CHAPTER VIII

SPRING RAMBLES

May 1899

MY days for fly fishing are few and far between, and when they come round they are generally the worst days in the month. Trout fishing on the Teme begins in March, so I thought that by the end of April I might have a chance. Having the privilege of fishing some preserved water, I ran down there. I fished the whole length, about two miles. I never saw a fly on the water or a single rise. What can one do with floating flies in such a case? I met the keeper—he was fishing—he said he had fished that stretch of water, man and boy, for fifty years, and he had never known such a season as this. He had fished that morning for two hours, and, like me, had caught nothing. He was fishing wet fly, and he knew how to do it. I was immensely consoled, for I had seriously begun to consider whether it was my fault or the fault of the

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fishes, that I didn't catch them. The wind was blowing cold from the north ; keeper said *east* was the wind for him—he could always kill fish in an east wind.

I gave it up. I had only another day, and that I devoted to long walks across green fields, through rugged lanes with high banks sparkling with primroses. I strolled through the park, lovely and picturesque as could be found even in this picturesque country of ours in the springtime of the year, when all nature is alive with the singing of birds and the springing up of buds and flowers. The park lies on a hill, here and there clad with clumps of pine and firs, and dotted with small enclosures for game, and bosky dells inlaid with ferns just throwing out their curly fronds above the brown dead leaves of other days. There were small herds of fallow deer scattered in different parts, and browsing in the open glades. Climbing over the top of the hill, under a spreading oak and hard by a clump of firs, I came upon a singular sight. Many of my readers, I am sure, have never seen a dead donkey—for it is well-known tradition that they never die within the range of mortal ken. I have never seen one, but here in the midst of the forest I came upon what seemed to me to be a still more singular sight, for there, under the oak, lay the dead body of "a poor sequestered stag." It must have lain there for some days, for the green grass was springing up around the carcase. How came he to lie there? How was it that keepers and

keepers' dogs had not long since found him out? Was he a victim "that from the *poacher's* hand had ta'en a hurt," and then, lost by him, had found a last refuge on this distant hill? Had he died from some poisonous weed or wicked reptile? He was not a poor starved thing, exiled intentionally from the herd: he was fat and well liking. I am sure it is a case where an apt quotation from *As You Like It* may be admissible. Shakespeare's deer, it will be remembered, had come to languish "under an oak, whose antique root peeps out upon the brook that brawls along this wood." Mine had fallen on the hill-top, far away from any brook; but then you may be sure that there, as the melancholy Jacques bemoaned, he

" heaved forth such groans
That their discharge did stretch his leathern coat
Almost to bursting, and the big round tears
Coursed one another down his innocent nose
In piteous chase.

" then being there alone,
Left and abandon'd of his velvet friends:
'Tis right,' quoth he: 'thus misery doth part
The flux of company.' Anon a careless herd,
Full of the pasture, jumps along by him
And never stays to greet him. 'Ay,' quoth Jacques,
'Sweep on, you fat and greasy citizens;
'Tis just the fashion: wherefore do you look
Upon that poor and broken bankrupt there?'"

I left the poor stricken deer as I found him. Dead he was, but how he came by his death is a mystery I had no time to inquire into.

I found my way down the pathless hill, disturbing thousands of rabbits, through a wood, and across green fields into the turnpike road. The only thing I noted was what seemed to me a curious fact, that rooks, those singular birds, should have established a rookery at a corner where four roads meet, in the elms overhanging the turnpike road. Why could they not go away into the woods, far from the haunts of men? No, here they were, here they had been for many years, with their nests just over the heads of every passer-by who chose to pot them or their young ones sitting outside the nests—the truth is they are sociable birds, they love the haunts of men, in spite of the instinct, the knowledge they possess, that man is their worst enemy, and will shoot them whenever they come within reach of his gun. It is not as if they were ignorant—they know exactly whether it is a gun or walking-stick you point at them. A quarter of a century ago a number of pairs of rooks established themselves in some elms above a new house then being built in the village of Hampstead; they were, of course, the cause of its being called *Rookwood*, and there in those trees they have nested and reared their young in undisturbed happiness till the beginning of this year. Then it was that a large board was put up on the garden wall announcing the fact that the place—their place—was to be sold or let.

At this board they took great offence; they immediately gave notice that they would quit their

ancestral trees. They began at once to pull down their old nests, cleared them right away, and now they have disappeared entirely.*

Last week my bad luck as to weather pursued me down to Hampshire. Hitherto, to my old haunt on the Itchen, I came, full of hope, for some Whitsuntide trout fishing. I have had a bad beginning. On Friday afternoon the wind and rain were dead against me, and there was nothing doing to encourage a dry-fly man to hope for the most modest success; not a rise could be seen, and yet there was apparently an abundance of flies, driven hither and thither by the ceaseless wind. The swallows were outrageously greedy. Over and over again would they pick up my fly from the water, and drop it like a nasty thing. I had armed myself, to begin with, with the fly so highly spoken of by Sir E. Grey, and which may be called *Sir E. Grey's Black Spider*.† With it I soon captured a brace of grayling, which I did not want. Thinking it was perhaps more attractive to grayling (which abound), I rashly changed it for a nice Yellow Dun. I played at floating fly in a "chuck-and-chance-it" sort of way—for what else can a dry-fly man do when there is nothing visible

* Last spring (that is a year afterwards) they came back to survey their old home; they did not build, but I have observed that ever since then they come there every evening to roost—probably next year they will build again, they could not find a safer or more charming abode.

† Sir E. Grey only recommends the Black Spider for a warm, quiet evening, when the trout are rising, but refuse the ordinary Dun.

over which to display his skill?—but nothing came of it till I came down to the *pub.*, that is to say, a fine ash tree, now beginning to show its curling leaves (away behind the oak, which is in full leaf). Below this tree, lying just a-top of the water with a bunch of weeds hanging on to it, a wicked barbed wire crosses the stream, and there close up to this wicked wire a big trout was rising, I might almost say rubbing his nose against it.

It was a long cast, right in the teeth of the wind ; and with the fear of catching hold of that accursed wire, or being entangled in the weeds, always before me, I made many a cast before I could put my fly over him. He saw my lovely Yellow Dun, he came at it, and he was nicely hooked. He did not like it at all. His first move was to spring out of the water half-a-yard or so, and then into the weeds below, and there I left him with my pretty Dun sticking in his gills. That was the only Dun I had of that exact pattern. "To-morrow," I said, "I mean to have that Dun again, and you too, my friend." And so I went home, for it rained and blew, and there was nothing else to do.

Next day being Saturday, my good landlady—for she is good to me, looking after me like a mother, though she is thirty years younger than I am—asked me what I would like for dinner, not only for that day, but being Whitsuntide she had to provide for Sunday and Monday as well. I could only say, "My dear Mrs B——, you know exactly what I like, better than I know myself ; I



Photo. by

WAITING FOR A RISE.—p. 58.

Piscator Major.

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leave it entirely to you." That is the way we always settle that important question when I am here alone. Of course, ~~when the Professor~~ is here, things are quite different, then ~~he~~ rules the roast.

And so, in spite of wind and despite of weather, I and my little Sancho sallied forth again for further adventures. It was a day; if Friday was bad, Saturday was far, far worse. Sancho valiantly carried my impedimenta. The rain it rained, and the wind it blew, and now and then the sun shone out for a few minutes, and I cast my insect on the troubled waters; as well may I have cast it on the turnpike road.

I came at length to the barbed wire, and there was my friend as lively as ever, so I sent my barbed betrayer to look after that Dun in that trout's mouth, and, forgetful of the little game he had played yesterday, he tried it on again to-day. I hooked him, he adopted his old manœuvre—my line and fly came away without the trout, and he is still free to wriggle up against that barbed wire. But Whit Monday is coming, and I don't want to go home without that trout and the fly that is in him.

We were glad to get out of the rain and into the mansion sacred to fishermen. There we ate our luncheon, and watched the dappled cows across the water. My young philosopher told me all about them. He gave me their names and fighting qualities. "See that cow there, down by the water? she's called *Drafter*. She's the leader of the lot—

if any other cow goes into her stall she'd kill her. She fought her way to the top, and now they all respect her as the head cow ; and so it is with the second, and third, and fourth down to the last, every one has had to fight for the position she holds. See that red cow yonder ? she is No. *four*. She broke both her horns off fighting for that place. Of course, she can't fight any more now, but she keeps the place she won in fair fight."

Now, that was a lesson for me, for I had no notion before that cows were so punctilious and jealous of the position they had fought for. There are a score or more of them, and each one of them knows her own stall, and keeps it till she has promoted herself by her valour. As a rule there is perfect harmony amongst them when once the question of precedence is settled.

Now let us home to dinner. It is a pleasant thing to be hungry, and at the same time to know that a good dinner awaits you. I knew that much, but I had not the remotest idea of what that dinner would consist—and it was a dinner. Why, O *Professor* ; why, O *Piscator Major*, were you not there to partake of it ? It was too good to be eaten alone ! It was a feast for a round tableful of jolly anglers. It was a feast such as I had not tasted, or perhaps even heard of, for sixty years. What was it ? It was four-and-twenty black birds baked in a pie ! I do not vouch, however, for the exact number. The last time I tasted a pie like this, and the flavour of it remains with me to this day, was when, as a

boy, I shot the birds myself (Anno Domini 1840), and never have I tasted *rook pie* since. I had come to regard the shooting of young rooks as a merciless cruelty, but now—surely the end justifies the means! Let no angler in future compound for his sins who hooks the trout by condemning man or boy who shoots the rook.

Sunday—a *dies non* for all anglers who have conscientious scruples, or who respect the conventionalities—a lovely morning, soft and balmy, no wind, only a gentle S.W. breeze, an ideal day for fishing; trout rising freely all down the river as far as I could see. May Whit Monday be as gracious; but the evening is wet and ominous.

Whit Monday was really a splendid day for holiday-makers in these parts, and I fancy for anglers in some places. Between ten and eleven-thirty there was a fair rise of small fish, after that I saw scarcely any up to four o'clock, when I left off.

Of course I looked after my trout at the barbed wire—there he was as lively as ever. I changed my fly twice, and covered him fifty times, till at last he came at me with a dash, seized the fly, was hooked, and he made such a fluster in and about that bed of weeds—for he is a big one—that his lip gave way, and he returned my fly safe and sound. He has taken up more than half-an-hour of my precious time, and I am loath to leave him.

I hope when the May Fly is up I may have another tussle with him. *Three* times have I had

that trout within my grip, as it were, and thrice has he eluded me. Surely it will be my turn next.

Tuesday morning, before leaving for London, I walked down to the barbed wire (without my rod) on the opposite side of the river. There I could see him plainly, gay and frisky as ever. I think I shall find him there when I come again, for, happily, he has chosen a spot not easily accessible to even an expert angler from this side.

My success has been of a negative kind, for I lost several big trout and caught only one brace, and two brace of grayling — two of them big fellows, but certainly under 2 lbs. each. They gave me a little sport, and I gave them their freedom. I am not disappointed, because I did not expect to do much. On the contrary, I have found "books in the running brook, and good in everything."





Photo. by

ON THE ITCHEN.—p. 62.

Piscator Major.



CHAPTER IX

OUR HOLIDAY IN CORNWALL

August 1899

CORNWALL has many attractions, but it cannot be said that any one solely on angling bent would be likely to choose the Duchy of Cornwall in preference to the Principality of Wales, or Scotland, or Ireland, or many a spot in the kingdom of Great Britain ; but I was not exclusively on angling bent. I only hoped to pick up a little here and there by the way, and so it was that we decided to find our way to the end of England and gradually work back from the farthestmost west to the great metropolis in the east.

On Thursday, July 20, memorable for its suffocating heat, we started for a nine hours' journey by Great Western Railway.

One of the attractions of going westward is that you can place some reliance as to time on the promises of the Great Western Railway. We kept

time at every station, and reached our destination at the appointed minute.

On crossing the Tamar at Saltash we left the kingdom of England and entered the Duchy of Cornwall. I am told that the Cornish people regard the peninsula, or island of Cornwall, as a country quite independent of such a foreign country as England, and that England is far more dependent on Cornwall for its general wealth and prosperity than Cornwall is on England. Cornwall can do very well without England, but England without Cornwall must soon come to grief.

What an interesting country it is that one gets peeps of from the Tamar to Penzance! We fancy ourselves to be riding along the backbone of the peninsula, for rising slowly up the steep inclines and swiftly down the declines, we are surprised now and then to come upon a broad river like the Fowey at Lostwithiel, when we thought we were high up on the hills above. From Saltash to Truro the scenery is surely as enchanting as any to be found in Great Britain; the hills are covered with green foliage, the vales and dales always changing, and the train skipping along viaducts suspended high in the air from one point to another. The railway passes high above, and looks down upon the city and cathedral of Truro, and thenceforward the scenery changes to open and bleak moorland, dotted here and there with the tall chimneys and accumulated piles of slag from the numerous mines now silent and smokeless,

looking for the most part like relics and ruins of a past age. The country between Lostwithiel and St Austell seems to be devoted to another industry, that of *white clay*, and it appears to be flourishing. We reached Marazion* in the gloaming, and there we caught a glimpse of St Michael's Mount standing out in solitary grandeur, a single light burning on the summit, and so, wearied and hungry, we soon reached our head-quarters at Penzance.

Friday and Saturday, 21st and 22nd, we devoted to taking our bearings; the heat was sultry here, as it was everywhere in those days. The lovely Morrab Garden, with its numerous tropical plants, smelt and felt like a furnace of suffocating delights, but what a charming place it is in moderate spring, autumn, or winter weather.

One of our drives took us through the little village of Gulval, with its fine church ("the prettiest in West Cornwall"), and churchyard filled with flowering plants of great variety—a veritable garden in which it must be pleasant to lay one's mortal remains when the troubles and sorrows of life are over. Hereabouts is land which gives the farmer three crops a year and the landlord £10 an acre.

On Tuesday (25th) we visited St Michael's Mount, a mysterious, weird-looking rock, which, as everybody knows, stands out from the mainland at Marazion about a quarter of a mile.

* In pronouncing Marazion you must emphasize the penultimate *zi*.

Sixteen hours out of twenty-four it is completely surrounded by the sea ; during the remaining eight hours there is a dry causeway by which the island can be reached afoot.

The interior is interesting from its antiquarian associations ; it was once a religious priory, a State prison, and a fortress. Now it is the private residence of Lord St Levan, who permits the public to visit it at times during the absence of his family. We went through the apartments, formerly occupied by "monks, nuns, and intriguers," in one of which, now a chapel, we were shown, under an unsuspecting seat, recently discovered, the entrance to an awful dungeon, in which the skeleton of a man, supposed to be that of Sir John Arundel, was found. Down into this fearful hole, of course, I went. It is a stone box, probably ten feet square, and when the door or lid is closed there is absolutely no opening of any kind for ventilation—a nice place to spend a lifetime in ! I then screwed myself round a narrow, winding staircase up to the top of the tower, two hundred and fifty feet above the sea. No man over fourteen stone need attempt it, unless his weight consists of length not breadth—he couldn't do it ! On the leads of the square tower, of course, there is to be had a grand view of surrounding sea and country. The causeway did not serve us—we had to *row* from England to St Michael's, and we returned to England by the same means.

The island is quite independent and self-



LAND'S END—FROM THE SOUTH.—p. 66,



contained. It has about eighty inhabitants, who live, die, and are buried there.

Land's End is about twelve miles from Penzance. The means of getting there are by sea or by four-horse Jersey car (that is, what is called *char-a-banc* in other places). As we did not want to be tied to time anywhere we took a carriage, which for three was not more costly; and so we started on a bright, breezy, sunshiny morning.

Our road was delightful, in many places running through long avenues of gratefully shady trees, though the up-and-down hills were trying for the horse. We found our way through an ancient village called St Buryan. In the churchyard is an old and perfect Cornish cross; there is also one near the village inn, and a tombstone to which your attention is specially requested by the attendant, on account of the curious and suggestive poem thereon, which I copied, although it is found in the guide-books.

"Our life is but a *winter's** day,
Some only breakfast and away,
Others to dinner stay and are full fed,
The oldest only sups and goes to bed.
Largest is his debt who lingers out the day,
Who goes the soonest has the least to pay."

On reaching Treryn Point we traversed some fields, and, by the aid of a guide, scrambled over rocks till we came in full view of the Logan Stone—an immense block weighing nearly one hundred

* The guide-book says *summer's*.

tons—intermingled with groups of other rocks as large, and of all manner of shapes and forms. The peculiarity of this stone is that by a mere touch of the hand it can be made to rock. We climbed over the great granite blocks up to this stone. Our guide satisfied us on the point of its shakiness by giving it the needful push. Once, about seventy-five years ago, an adventurous sailor, for a wager, applying unusual might, actually did topple it over, and it fell some feet, when it was caught by other rocks. The adventurer had to pay for his rashness by being compelled to replace it at an enormous cost.

On we go to the End of this Land of England, till we come to the Land's End Hotel—the very last place or the very first place where anything to eat and drink is obtainable.

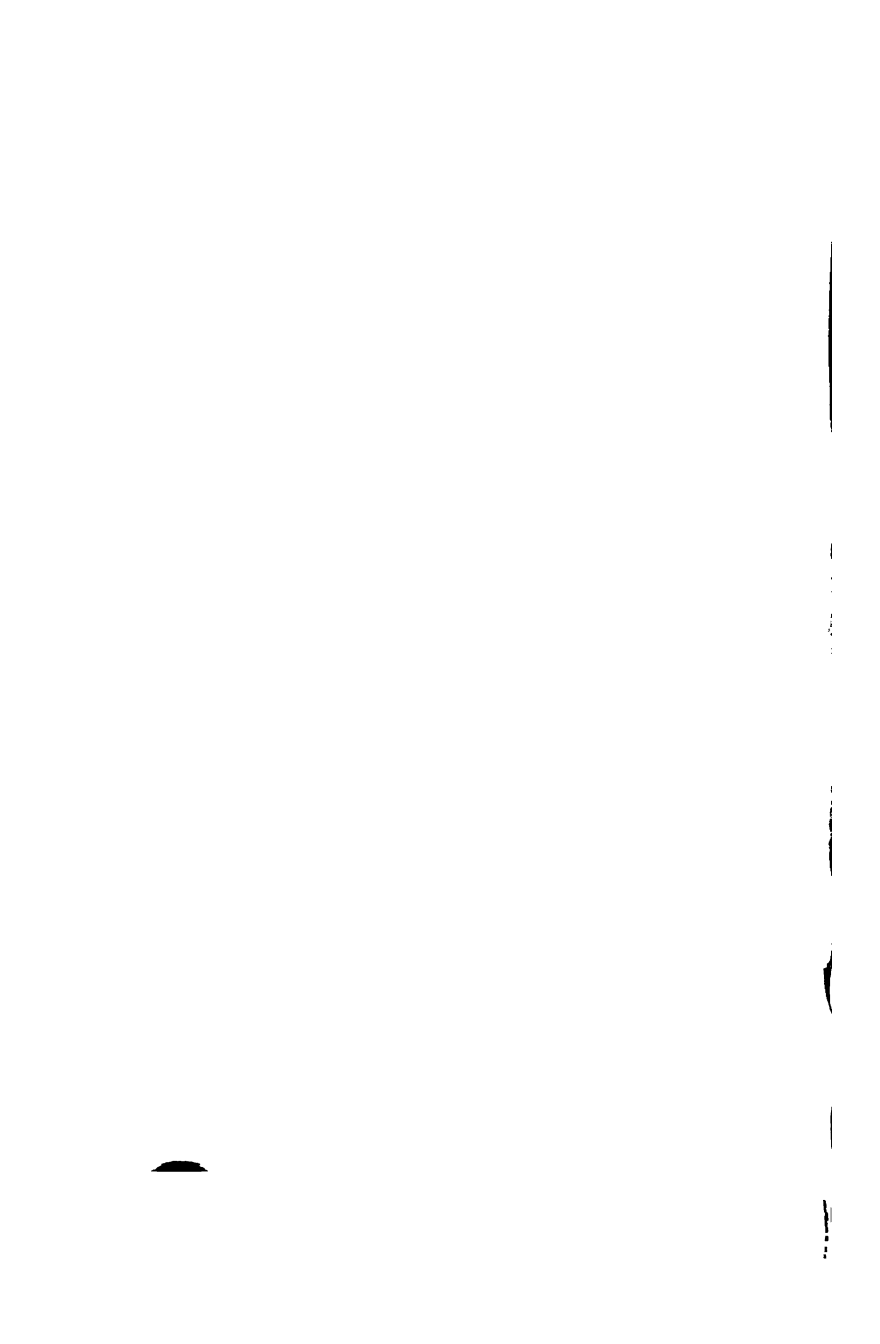
Our interesting guide always, from habit, addressed us, "Now, ladies and gen'loman, let me point out."

We had already passed Pothcurno Cove, where the Eastern Telegraph wire comes to land, and a little further northward is the Atlantic Cable Station, bringing messages from all parts of this habitable globe.

"Now, ladies and gen'loman, away out yonder, ten miles at sea, you will observe the Wolfrock Lighthouse, and, looking straight ahead, you will see in dim outline, for it is rather hazy, the Scilly Islands, about twenty-five miles away ; sometimes the cliffs are clearly visible."



FIRST AND LAST REFRESHMENT HOUSE IN ENGLAND.—p. 68.



Between this point of England and those cliffs lies buried in the depths of the Atlantic the fabled "Land of Lyonesse."

"That wide space of ocean was once solid land, a rich and fertile country, dotted with no less than one hundred and forty parish churches, the lost 'Land of Lyonesse'; and these countless isles of Scilly . . . are the peaks and high grounds of that vanished country, which stood up above the inrush of sea waves that drowned the lower lands fathoms deep beneath the ocean.

"Is there any truth in this old story? Was there ever such a land stretching westwards from these cliffs?"

Mr Arthur H. Norway in his very interesting work, *Highways and Byways in Devon and Cornwall*, from whose work the above is quoted, seems to think there is some truth in the fabled existence of this wonderful land. He says—

"For my part, I claim that tradition is rarely altogether wrong. What she tells us contains a kernel of truth, however twisted or concealed by careless repetition, and it would in my judgment be far stranger if this definite and precise story had grown up with no other foundation than if it were in truth an actual recollection of that great tragedy which can have had no parallel in the history of this country, and few in that of any other."

It was with a feeling of regret that we were compelled to forego the pleasure of a trip to these most interesting islands.

After pointing out to us what our guide described as "almost the only cape on all the coasts of Great Britain, viz. Cape Cornwall (for all other such places are called 'points' or headlands)," and "The Sisters," a dangerous clump of rocks, perhaps a mile out from the Cape, with an underwater reef whose jagged teeth sometimes peep above the surface of the water between the two, dooming to certain death and destruction any ship venturing, through ignorance or stress of weather, to attempt what looks like a short cut between these two heads, he drew us down the north side of the cliff over most slippery and dangerous rocks to get a glimpse of the Zawn-Pyg Cave. "Now," cried our guide, "ladies and gen'laman, if you will lean over on that square block of granite with your head well forward, and suspended over the awful gulf below, and twisting your neck and head round to the right, you will see light through the large cavern on your right. That cavern, ladies and gen'laman, connects St George's Channel on the north with the English Channel on the south." So saying he sprang up on the rock, and laid down at full length with his head and shoulders away over the brink. "That's the way to do it, sir. You must not leave the Land's End without accomplishing that feat. Put your foot on my knee, grab hold of the edges, and gradually draw yourself on to the rock. I'll lift you up behind. All right, sir, on you go ; only two feet further, and there you are. I'll hold on to your legs, never

fear." And so I mounted the rock, and dragged myself and was shoved along till I got my nose just over the brink. "On you go, sir; a foot more and there you are. Can you see daylight?" "*No* thank you," cried I; "not an inch further will I go. I can see far enough into the cavern to believe there is light shining through. Now haul me back, if *you* please!" Our guide was quite disappointed to find me so funky as to refuse to hang head and shoulders over the brink and then twist my neck round as he had done. "Wait till you are seventy-five, my boy," said I, "and then try it!"

Then he led us back up over the awful crags till we reached a level spot, in the centre of which was a square stone with a cross on it.

"Now, ladies and gen'leman," says our guide, standing on the stone, "I stand now on the very spot where once stood a celebrated classic poet, his name, it was Charles Wesley; and here it was that he composed a poem, which, with your permission, I shall now recite to you." And then he began in tragic form, and in a loud voice—

"O, on a narrow neck of land,
"Twixt two unbounded seas I stand," etc., etc.

After showing us many other objects of interest, unnecessary to record, as I am not writing a guide-book, we parted with him, and returned to Penzance by another route.

Thursday, July 27, was my first fishing day—a

red-letter day for me. On this day it was that "*The Amateur Angler*" and "*Noss Mayo*" first foregathered. We had by previous correspondence arranged for this day to visit, by the generous permission of the owner, a lovely lake in the centre of Cornwall, not a hundred miles from Penzance on the one hand, or Saltash on the other.

I am not going to betray confidence or allow my readers to approach nearer to our lake than I have thus indicated. Their mouths must water outside. Wild horses will not drag further information on this head from me. Here we are, then, "*Noss Mayo*" and I, on a lovely summer's afternoon, on one of the most lovely lakes that ever was seen, three sides of it surrounded by noble elms, occidental and oriental limes, and an infinite variety of trees and shrubs and flowering plants, casting their shadows on the water gently rippled by the breeze. A fourth side lies open to the park-like lawn on which the mansion looks down, and here one could cast from the bank without fear of tree or shrub. This lovely lake is full of trout, "too full," says our noble host, and yet I ought not to tell it in Gath nor make it known in Israel, but truth must prevail. We fished before lunch, we fished after lunch; we fished before tea, we fished after tea till the gloaming; and what did we catch? There were three of us—we fished from the shore, and we fished in a boat—two experts and the A. A. Had we weighed-in when we left off the lot would not have turned the scale against a

dead weight of 2 lbs., but, of course, the trout ran small, and yet such was the fascination, the beauty, the altogether loveliness of the spot, that one longs already for another such day. What matters it whether you catch a fish or not when you can spend the livelong summer's day in trying to catch them in the midst of such pleasant surroundings?

Our genial host showed me the identical spot where, sixty years ago, he caught his first trout; he showed me an old gnarled and dying fir-tree which his grandfather had planted; and many other such reminders of the passing of the ages he pointed out. He drew my attention on the foot-path by the lake to a singular straight gutter, six or eight feet long, right across the path, about an inch deep and an inch wide, with a small hole into the ground at each end. This gutter or railway-cutting had been dug out by a colony of ants, who were busily engaged in carrying on large business transactions along this line all day long, and had been at work in the same way for years. He showed me a charter granted by Henry VIII. to one of his forefathers; he traced back his direct ancestry who dwelt on this spot for seven hundred years, and possibly untraceable as many more. I said the spot, but not the house, for that has been burnt down several times; the present mansion is modern. Accompanying us to the station as we walked by the back of the house, he pointed to a large riding-school, not much used now, except,

said he, with a humorous twinkle, as a warehouse for our furniture when we are going to have another fire !

And so ended a pleasant day worth coming into the heart of Cornwall to spend.





CHAPTER X

OUR HOLIDAY IN CORNWALL—*continued*

Friday, July 28

WE were told not to miss St Ives, so thither we betook ourselves. Situated on the north side of the peninsula, and open to the Atlantic, it possesses a delightfully bracing atmosphere, quite noticeable after the mild humidity of Penzance. The bay looking across to Godrevy Lighthouse from the terrace above the railway is very lovely, its blue waters rivalling the blue of the Bay of Naples. Looking seaward the prospect is equally charming, for it was just the brilliant day that shows up natural beauty in the highest perfection. The narrow, crooked streets are interminable, but most quaint and attractive.

On Saturday, July 29, we went to the Lizard. It was a long journey, partly by rail to Helston, and then by Jersey car. The few hours at our disposal did not afford us sufficient time to see everything; we saw what we could. We were met on alighting

by a small man, about ten years old, who asked us if we wanted a guide. His face was so bright, and he looked so intelligent, that we at once engaged him. His father assured us that he knows every rock, fissure, nook, and cranny for miles around the Lizard Point. "The most interesting part," began our guide, "and that which I should advise you to see first, is the Kynance Cove, about a mile and a half away." He spoke with perfect ease, correctness, and assurance. The way he would round off his sentences with "*and also*" was quite in the proper style, for he was head of his class at school in grammar, writing, drawing, geometry, etc.

"Is Kynance Cove worth going so far to see on such a hot day as this?" I said. "Worth going to see! Why, my grandfather says it's the most wonderful place in Cornwall, and he '*also*' says 'that a man is a fool who says it is not.' Once a man did come here, and he said Kynance Cove wasn't to be compared with Land's End. Grandfather says, 'that man went off his chump!'"

"Heigho!" cried our young guide. "There's a Red Admiral!" and off he dashed, cap in hand, in pursuit of this butterfly, but missed to catch it. "There are four butterflies in this neighbourhood that are rare and valuable," said he; "all the rest are common. These are 'The Painted Lady,' 'The Red Admiral,' 'The Peacock,' and '*also*' the *Storma fletries*. I am unable to spell this name correctly, I think it is Latin." I know nothing

about butterflies, perhaps he meant one of the *fritillaries*. Then he guided us across the fields down to the Cove, a paradise for artists, where several were at work. He pointed out with the gravity of an old man all the different points of interest, the names of the rocks, the faces or figures represented by certain profiles, the large caves, through which he insisted on dragging us ; then he brought us to a place and began kicking the limpets off the rocks. I struck off one with my stick. "That's not the way to do it," says our guide, "you've only got the shell, the limpet is there still, you must smash 'em." "Why do you do that?" I asked. "Ah, I'm going to show you something. Look into this '*well*' ; now see how the fish will come out." The well is a circular crevice in the rocks, perhaps three yards in circumference, filled with perfectly clear fresh water. He dropped a limpet into the water, and out rushed a number of small fishes from four inches to six inches in length. These he called *mullies*, so let that be their name. I never saw them or knew their names before, so I have no right to question the correctness of the nomenclature of this young ten-year-old, practical, scientific philosopher ; they were not unlike the miller's thumb. "You watch how they'll fight till the big one comes out, then he'll take it from them as cool as anything, and it's against the law to touch them."

The rocks one has to scramble over to get down to the beautiful sand are all serpentine.

"Serpentine ornaments ought to be very cheap, seeing the quantity there is of it," I remarked. "But this surface rock," said our young guide, "is no use for working. We have to get it out of deep quarries, and it costs a lot of money to get up the right sort for the ornaments sold in the shops. There's so much competition that, father says, they have to sell much cheaper now than they used to."

I am inclined to admit that our guide's grandfather's opinion of Kynance Cove is correct. It is a most charming spot—wild as it is beautiful—the haunt of all kinds of sea-birds; it is a place every one who goes to Cornwall should visit, and they will be lucky if they get our little hero to guide them.

The accompanying "View from the Parlour" is from a beautiful photograph by Messrs. Gibson, of Penzance.

This walk, in the heat of a July sun, down over rocks and through crevices, and in and out of caves, and then back to the Lizard, had quite exhausted our taste for further sight-seeing, and so we had to bid good-bye to this interesting boy, "and also" to his father and mother, his grandfather and grandmother, and his uncle Joe, all of whom are very proud of him.

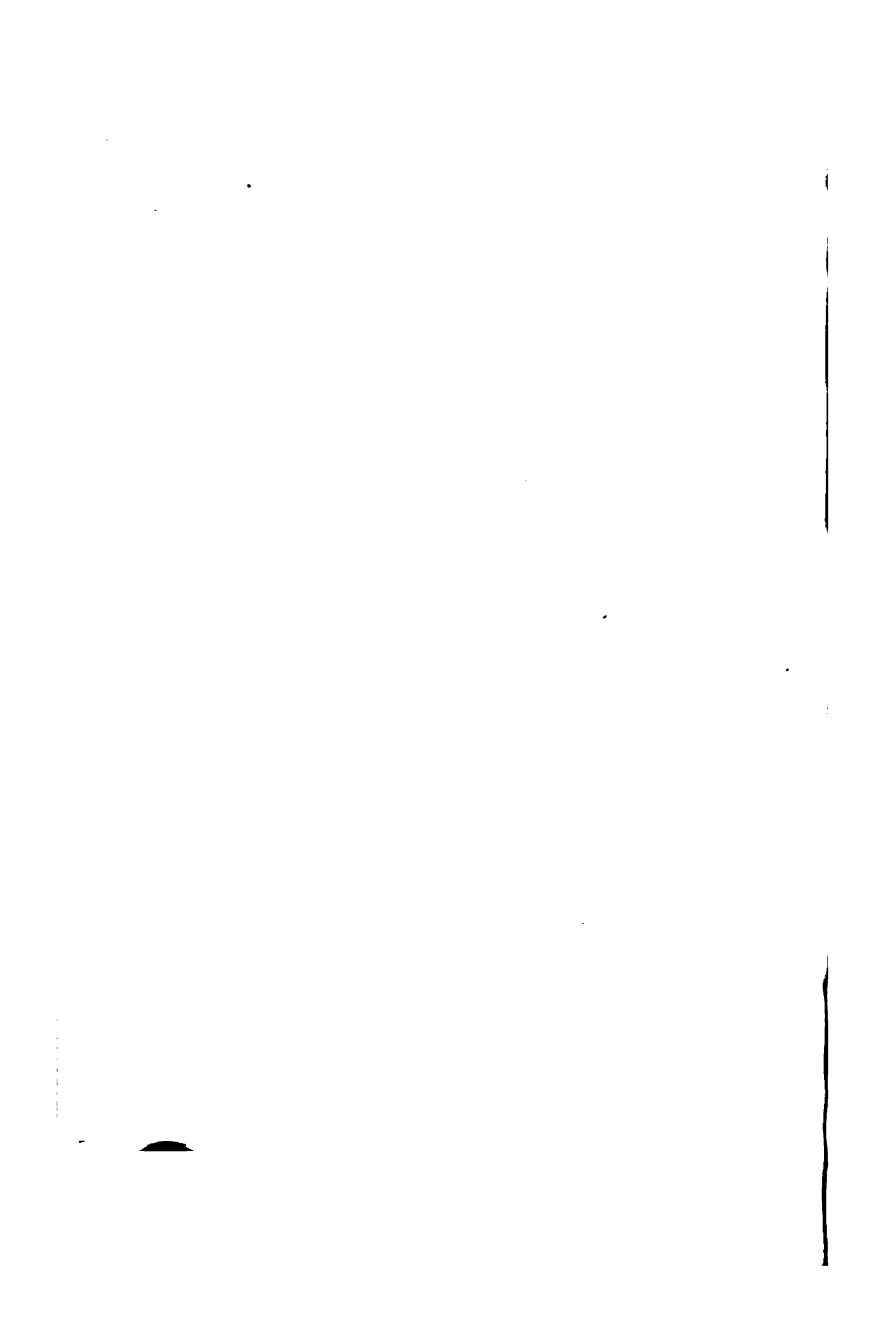
We had before us a twenty-two mile jaunt on a four-horse Jersey car. A lovely drive it was, and a pleasant, always on a good road—much up hill, and much down hill, now through rich agricultural



Photo. by

VIEW FROM THE "PARLOUR," KYNANCE COVE.—*p.* 78.

Gibson, Penzance.



lands yellow with wheat and corn ripe and ready for scythe or sickle, now over bleak moorland dotted here and there with the tall chimneys of extinct volcanoes, now silent and smokeless because, owing to foreign competition, the market for tin has temporarily departed, let us hope to return again, of which, indeed, there does exist some little hope, as the price of tin in the market has again gone up to paying-point. No sooner, however, does this faint hope of revival occur than the miners themselves seem determined to give themselves the final *coup de grâce* by striking for higher wages than, apparently, the present state of things would seem to warrant.

Notwithstanding this apparent badness of the times, poverty, if it exists in Cornwall at all, is certainly not to be seen on the surface. What strikes one as much as anything is the fondness of Cornish people for holiday-making, picnicking, and-excursionizing. One cannot go out across the country in any direction without finding jolly, joyful parties, in trains and on Jersey cars, in fields, and on the sea-shore, all on pleasure bent; and they *do* enjoy themselves thoroughly, unrestrained by social formalities.

On our drive, about half-way home, our coach-load met another coach-load at a wayside inn which bears the peaceful sign of an enormous lion lying down outside a nice little lamb.

In a field hard by was a picnic party, with a band playing. One of the young fellows on the

opposite coach cried, "Come along for ten minutes' fun, while the horses are being watered." Off he started as fast as he could run, down to the meadow, followed by a dozen other young men and maidens. They broke into a circle of like young folks playing at "kiss in the ring," joined hands with them *sans cérémonie*; round and round they went, had their fun and their kisses, and back again to their coach in time to be off.

That is how they do things in Cornwall. Ah! were I but sixty years younger I would have rallied our load to join the fun, but *our* coach-load, consisting of what Cornish folk call "foreigners," was too reserved, proper, severe, and clerical-looking a lot to join in such frivolities; and so we got home from the Lizard.

Sunday, July 30.—A day of rest.

Monday, July 31.—This last day of July we were astir early. We took train to Truro; had time to catch a glimpse of the beautiful new cathedral, as yet unfinished. A new cathedral in this old country is a novelty, and this one bids fair to be at least as beautiful, if not as large as the best of the old English cathedrals; indeed, there seems to be no reason why it should not be the most beautiful of all, being the last. Our architects have the advantage of all the great examples that exist throughout our land. As the old masters of painting exist to-day for the guidance and instruction of the painters of to-day, so

do our old cathedrals stand up as models for our architects.

Our route to Falmouth was to be by water from Truro—the boats can only come up to Truro at high tide—so we had to drive down by the river-side to Malpas. There we boarded the little steamer, *The Queen of the Fal*, and we passed down the Fal on a glorious day (as all our days have hitherto been), through the most enchanting woodland scenery that one could desire: a broad, bright blue-green river, in which were reflected the banks and foliage-clad hills. Tregothnan, the noble seat of Lord Falmouth, presents a picture of fairy-like grandeur, as we catch a glimpse of it on an eminence above as we pass down the river. It is a custom to compare all fine river scenery with the Thames at Clieveden, but the Fal, especially that bend of it called the King Harry Passage, can hardly be surpassed for wood-clad scenery by any river in the world.

On this enchanted fairy-boat (not particularly clean or fairy-like) we glide into the Bay of Falmouth. "There," as Mr Norway says, "bursts suddenly upon the sight a wide, green land-locked sea."

Yonder, as we pass into the harbour, the object of most interest just now, lies the unfortunate steamer *Paris*, having her inside pumped out previous to going into dock. Falmouth looks down, on its northern side, on this land-locked sea, on the opposite side of which lies the village of Flushing.

Presently, as we drive round the Castle of Pendennis, and looking along the coast westward, we catch a glimpse in the distance of the Manacles, the fatal rocks on which the *Paris* came to grief.

A very charming drive we had along the cliffs as far as a fresh-water lake called Swan Pool, which is only separated from the sea by a sand bar and the roadway.

We saw as much of Falmouth as could be seen in an hour's drive, and we concluded that it is a town "beautiful for situation," and certainly possesses many attractions.

August 1.—To-day we went on a search expedition to find a marvellous rock dedicated to the Devil. We had difficulty in finding it, because few of the people we met had ever heard of such a wicked thing; and yet, in its way, it is a curiosity well worth a long walk. We found it half buried in bushes, though a very prominent object, on the brow of a hill overlooking the village of Newlyn. It consists of an enormous stack of broken granite rocks, and, like "flies in amber," one "wonders how the devil it got there," except on the supposition that his sable majesty had carried it upon his back in a net from the depths below, and in order to rest himself had there thrown it down, and the fall had caused it to break into a confused mass of immense boulders. This impression is confirmed by the undoubted fact that on all the outer surfaces of the rocks are very clearly traceable the strongly-marked crossed lines, having all the appearance

of a strong fisherman's net. This fossilized network is really remarkable, and, of course, fully justifies the legend that the devil had a hand in it—hence it has been properly named

"The Devil's Fishing Net."

Let me add a word about Cornish stiles. These are the very easiest things for bipeds to cross, but they are veritable traps to catch cattle or sheep. They are at most not a foot in height. I hardly know how to describe one. First, a pit is dug in the fence two or three feet deep; over this pit are placed in line with the hedge four or six great slabs of granite, each of them about six feet long, eight inches deep, and six inches wide. These slabs are laid at intervals of about a foot, so that cattle or sheep attempting to cross may as likely as not get one or other of their legs down between the slabs, and so come to grief. Bipeds, of course, using their eyes, can be more circumspect. I fancy they are peculiar to Cornwall. One could wish they were in common use everywhere, and specially by river-sides, where anglers have always terrible fences to contend with.

Wednesday, August 2.—This day we took a short drive to the villages of Mousehole and Paul, passing through the terrible village, beloved of artists, called Newlyn. A drive through it is quite a novel experience. Up streets as steep as the roofs of the quaintest weather-beaten old houses; down streets quite as steep, and wide enough only for one vehicle to pass. If you happen to meet

another coming up your way or down your way it is not easy to imagine what would happen. We were lucky in having one or two narrow escapes. After many a turn and many a twist we got through Newlyn at last, and soon came upon the village of Mousehole—Newlyn and Mousehole are the head-quarters of the celebrated pilchard and mackerel fisheries, where some two thousand fishermen are occupied in the business. It was in Newlyn that I first heard a strange language, which sounded to me like Welsh, but I was assured that the people were really talking good broad English. I can only say that not a word of it was understandable by me. There used to be a language called Cornish, but the last person who spoke it was an old woman named Dolly Pentreath, who died at the age of one hundred and two in the year 1775. There is a granite obelisk to her memory in the churchyard of Paul, and on it is mentioned the fact that she was the last who could speak that now dead language. A specimen of it is given on the tombstone, which I quote as follows—

"Gwra perthi, de taz ha de mam; mal de Dythiow belhewz hyr war an tyr nel an arleth de dew ryes dees."

(This is the fifth Commandment, "Honour thy father," etc.)

Zawn-Pyg Cave, Land's End.—This beautiful picture shows the cavern referred to in the previous article; the prominent square block of granite on the right of the opening is one on which one has to hang over in order to see daylight through the cavern from sea to sea.



Photo. by

Preston, Penzance.

ZAWN-PYG CAVE, LAND'S END.—p. 84.



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CHAPTER XI

OUR HOLIDAY IN CORNWALL—*continued*

A LITTLE way out of the quaint village of Paul (they drop the *Saint* when dealing with a real one) we come unexpectedly on an unpretentious place called Port Enys Museum.

It is a private museum, but the generous owner, W. E. Baily, Esq., kindly throws it open to all visitors who come with decent credentials.

We called there, and were as much surprised as we were pleased with what we saw. The museum is quite beautifully arranged, and contains a wonderful collection of birds, quadrupeds, reptiles, butterflies, insects, and fishes.

What interested me most was the splendid collection of stuffed and plaster-cast fishes. The latter, being painted from life, are, in my humble opinion, greatly preferable to stuffed specimens, seeing that these invariably lose, in fact never possess, the brilliancy of colour as in life. The specimens of plaster-casts here presented, being

exquisitely copied from life by a clever artist, show vividly every colour, every spot, every vein and line, as they shone on the living fish. Of course, all depends on the skill displayed in painting the casts. Badly-painted casts are worse than useless ; but those I have now seen are true facsimiles ; and, given this artistic accuracy, plaster-casts are unquestionably more valuable than stuffed skins, the colours of which cannot be retained. On the other hand, it may be argued that skins can be painted, and that the owner of a stuffed skin knows that he possesses that which is unique, and cannot be multiplied as casts can. There is, adjoining the museum, a lecture-hall for students, with all modern appliances for studying not only nature but all the arts and sciences.

All this, be it remembered, is to be found on a rather inaccessible hill, surrounded only by the ancient habitations of old-fashioned Cornish fisher-folk.

Thursday, August 3.—I learn from the newspapers that in London the weather is a scorcher, that Cowes is a frying-pan, and the people are grilled ; we may comfort ourselves that here, in Penzance, the thermometer keeps steadily at 74° or 75° in the shade ; although it is hot, we can bear it.

We rode across the peninsula on a four-horse Jersey car, over the moors till we came to that remarkable rock called Gurnard's Head, and we were certainly not oppressed by the heat ; we were fanned by a gentle breeze most of the way, and

the heat of the sun was frequently tempered by clouds through which he came down upon us as through smoked glass, darkly. Some of the good folk thought it necessary to climb to the top of Gurnard's Head in order to keep themselves warm. We sat on the hill facing it, and felt warm enough without scrambling up those lofty rocks. When we had absorbed the view, without actually touching the rocks, we were wafted away on the four-horse car towards St Ives, and many a pretty moorland picture did we see as our team climbed up and down the hills. St Ives Bay, always beautiful, had put a hazy veil over its beauty, so that now we could see it only in part, the distance towards the lighthouse being almost invisible.

We returned to Penzance by another route ; the scenery now changed from wild moorland to rich and fertile fields of corn, cabbages, and green meadows—a very interesting drive.

August 4.—To-day we drove across the island from the south to the north of that part of England which lies between the English and the St George's Channel—from Penzance to St Just, or, rather, to the celebrated Levant tin and copper mine, which extends under the sea outwards for about two miles. Altogether, the various levels now at work extend in different directions for about forty miles. It is one of the very few mines now at work, and, after some years of severe losses, it appears to be recovering, and produces, at the time, a satisfactory dividend. About six

hundred men are employed. We had neither time nor had we sought permission to descend to the depths, two thousand feet under the sea. What we did see was sufficiently interesting. We were shown many of the works exhibiting the most ingenious methods by which the various metals are separated. It was particularly interesting to notice the use made of rusty, partly decomposed old iron, which has the property of attracting the last mites of copper from the final washings.

Passing through one room, we were all but asphyxiated by the fumes of sulphur and the evaporation by which arsenic is extracted from the ores, which, instead of flying off, as is its tendency, into smoke up a chimney, is so driven about through immense zigzag tubes before the final upright shaft is reached that a residue is left, enough to poison millions of people, and, as a bye-product, add materially to the profits of the mine.

The bay in which this mine lies has an evil celebrity for the many wrecks that occur there. A lighthouse is now being erected on a point a short distance westward. The question whether the minerals have anything to do with the deflection of the needle is as much mooted on this side of the land as on the southern side, where the Manacles lie, and which are supposed to have had a mysterious influence on the fate of the *Paris*.

August 5.—Ah! me. How these holidays do slip away! This is our last working day, and I have

not yet made use of the season-ticket which Captain Rogers, of Penrose, so kindly sent me to fish in the Loe Pool. I will not leave Cornwall without at least getting a glimpse of that celebrated lake. That resolution being passed *nem. con.*, I took train for Helston, in spite of the lowering weather ; a thunderstorm such as had not been known in Penzance for years occurred here last night, with hail and rain, which smashed over two hundred panes in the windows of St Mary's Church, and kept all the females in this establishment in a state of abject terror the livelong night.

I am not nervous in such circumstances, but it was quite impossible to sleep, the continuous vivid flashes of forked and the white glow of sheet lightning which lighted up my bedroom, and the continued roll of distant thunder, with an occasional crash overhead, effectually banished sleep—it was really a terrible night.

The air still seemed charged with electricity, hot, sultry, with a slight breeze. In face of this I went to Helston, and, after a most tiring and trying walk from the station of two miles and more in the broiling sun, I found myself at the head of the Loe Pool. It truly is a grand sheet of fresh water, many miles in circumference, closely bordering on the sea, with which its lower waters are, at certain tides, sometimes mingled ; but I did not see this lower part of the pool. In truth, I found the heat so trying, and the clouds so threatening of a storm to come, that I did not

peregrinate more than half-a-mile of the head waters of the pool. I saw no rises, except an occasional splash away out in the centre of the lake. I used only one fly—the Red Palmer—and tried to apply the dry floating fly system in which I had been educated, and to which I believe Loe trout are quite unused. In a few minutes the unusual sight of a floating fly attracted the attention of a fine trout, which, after a little display of energy on his part, came nicely into my net and thence into my basket, adding over a pound to its weight.

“Now,” said I, “if I can get one nice companion for you, my friend, I will go home, for here, surrounded by nothing but wild and lovely, lonely scenery, not a house to be seen, hungry and thirsty, and unprovided with food or drink, and a threatening storm overhead, I perish if I much longer stay.”

I met a solitary angler—an old hand who had fished all day and caught nothing—who, with envious though generous eyes, saw me deftly land my first trout; he congratulated me on my success, which I attributed to the floating fly system. This one success, however, was hardly sufficient to justify a claim for its superiority over the wet fly, and it was only the night before that by the latter system he told me he had in an hour or two caught four trout which collectively weighed 9 lbs. This day and up to this time no success had attended his efforts. I told him

of my imprudence and want of forethought in coming from Penzance to this lake-head without any provision for the inner man; but I had thought surely there must be an inn somewhere down on the pool; what more natural than to expect to find hereabouts a Saint Loe Hotel on St Loe's Lake?

"Let me," said I, "catch but one solitary companion to this fellow in my bag, and I will away."

He told me of a farmhouse over the hill where I may get a glass of milk, but that was hardly satisfying enough to justify a long climb, so I bid him adieu and fished homewards to the head of the lake. I had not proceeded far before my beautifully floating small Red Palmer drew the attention of another fine trout to its destruction. And so with a brace of trout, weighing together just over 2 lbs., of which I was proud, I ambled back to Helston, and there found refreshment and comfort in an inn.

I have the presumption to think that had I remained two or three hours longer on this lovely pool I should have brought away, and had to stagger homewards under, a good heavy load of Loe Pool trout.

My thanks are not the less due to Captain Rogers because I made so little use of the fishing-ticket he sent me; I learnt too late that I had lost a grand opportunity of educating the Loe trout in the deceitfulness of a floating fly.

"*Noss Mayo*" was to have met me here, and,

knowing the pool and its surroundings, he could and would have put me "up to the ropes," and together we should have played the very deuce with the trout—but he came not, being lured northward—

"Where the grouse lead their coveys thro' the heather to feed."

During our short stay at the Land's End we have seen as much as we could of the rock-bound coasts of England's Toe and Heel. The north side from New Quay to Tintagel is still a closed book to us, and now we are told on all hands that the grandest and noblest scenery is there to be found. Personally I would gladly have fished more and explored less, but I am not alone. I have shared in the amusements of my two lady companions, and we all regretfully bid farewell to West Cornwall.

By us the north-east coast of Cornwall must still retain its grandeur and its mystery unseen.





CHAPTER XII

IN PURSUIT OF THE MAY FLY

June 1900

A MILE away from our river a wise old gander, surrounded by half-a-dozen members of his family, was taking his afternoon snooze by the side of a pond in a farmyard. "*Quang-quang*," says he, sleepily; "*quang-quang-quang*," say the geese, drowsily, waking up. This means, translated into the language of the bipeds that don't wear feathers, "Time's up; let us be moving." Master Gander stood up, lazily swung his great wings, and waddled off towards the bank. There he saw a strange insect which at once brought to his mind the joys of days gone by. He seized the insect. "Hey-ho!" says he, "*quang-quang-quango*, hurrah! The MAY FLY IS UP. Off we go!"

Let it not be supposed that Master Gander and his flock were going to waddle a mile on their tender webbed feet along the hard turnpike road

to the river ; not they. Geese in these parts are as big as swans in other parts. Master Gander spreads abroad his great wings—six feet from tip to tip—and his fat wives do the same, and off they go, like a rushing mighty wind, filling the air with clanging and clamour, over the houses, over the trees, over the church, away up over the steeple, till down they come with one great swoop on to the middle of the river, causing a commotion compared with which a penny steamer at full speed suddenly blown up in the middle of the Thames would have been as nothing.

I started in pursuit of the May Fly on June 1, but I was too sanguine. For two or three days my waiting and watching, clad in wintry apparel, was all in vain ; a biting north-easterly gale was blowing ; occasional scudding sleet came driving up the river ; what May Fly in his senses would think of leaving his warm bed down in the mud to come up and flutter away his brief life in such wintry weather as this ? It was not to be expected ; but I was there, I had travelled one hundred and fifty miles with no other object than to discover the May Fly, and so I waited, and watched, and wandered by that bleak river-side, till at last my Job-like patience seemed as if it was going to be rewarded.

I saw a solitary May Fly fluttering on the surface of the water, and presently a trout, wondering what the insect was, came up ; there was a flop, the water moved round and round in widening circles, and the misguided insect was no longer to be seen.

Now was the time for me to place my G.O.M. on the outer rim of that magic circle and let him float gently down over the centre of it, when lo, the deluge! It was at that identical, that critical moment, I am certain my trout, stimulated by the delicious morsel he had just swallowed, was coming at me, when swish! down comes that mighty avalanche of geese right above my G.O.M., shrieking and screaming, splashing, and dashing, and crashing, just as "the waters come down at Lodore!"

My first impulse was to curse those geese; here was my first, my only chance for days; my first May Fly swallowed by my first trout; my first trout lost; my G.O.M. in jeopardy by those accursed geese. How rejoiced I should have been if that villainous old gander had spied my G.O.M. and that he had it firmly fixed in his gullet.

But no, on reflection I bethought me, why should I curse them? They had done no harm to me, or very little, after all. I began to feel amused rather than angered. Geese are very curious animals; they have a clear and distinct vocabulary of their own, and they talk to each other incessantly; they are gregarious; they are sociable; they are pugnacious; and they taught the gods to hiss.

"When the rain raineth and the goose winketh,
Little wots the gosling what the goose thinketh."

The Compleat Bachelor, by Oliver Onions.

Not for themselves do they feed themselves fat on May Fly and other insects, to say nothing of the

green grass and farmyard stuff they consume ; and pray tell me, when they are fat, and have made themselves ready for the cook and the spit, what more delicious than a fine Michaelmas goose? Was not Queen Elizabeth on her way to Tilbury entertained with roast goose? It was after partaking of a hearty dinner of goose that she gave the toast, "Destruction to the Spanish Armada." Thereupon immediately came the news of the total destruction of that fleet. "Henceforth," said the Queen, "shall a goose commemorate that great victory."

The goose is a classic bird. The *royal game of goose* belongs, so far as I know, to remote antiquity. Every one knows that the Capitol of Rome was saved by the cackling of the wise and sacred geese. Geese and goslings, ducks and ducklings, swarm on this river. There is no getting away from them. A pleasant thing it is to see a flock of geese come sailing down-stream on to a favourite quiet stretch just as you are casting over a rising trout. "Shoolag," you shout. They hate that word. It means to them something quite opprobrious, and they launch out at you such a volley of abuse as would turn your hair grey if you understood their language ; but down they come. Nothing will stop them but a lump of mud. This makes them turn round and sail up the water which they had already disturbed for half-a-mile. To fish after them would be folly, for, to say nothing of the commotion they make in the water, they clear it of

every insect, and leave nothing for a fish to rise at.

By a short cut we get above them, and by shoo-lagging and pelting we succeed, after much cackling and abuse, in turning their heads down-stream. Then for a few minutes we get a bit of quiet fishing, and a brace of nice trout come into our creel.

No sooner have we got rid of the geese than we are haunted by hundreds of ducks and ducklings. You make a nice cast over a rising trout, and out from under the bushes darts a week-old duckling—one of a score or two—and the others scurry after him, and make a dash at your "barbed betrayer." You must quickly remove your insect or hook the little innocent, and so it goes on. This is one only of the minor incidents that help to mar your sport on this pleasant river.

Now I may pause to tell you that by good luck I have found a very remarkable boy—a born angler, and no mistake. Born he was on the margin of this river; he is twelve years old. I will call him Izaak, but that is not his real name. "Ever since I can remember," says he, "I have loved this river. I began to fish in it, I think, as soon as I could walk," and now at the mature age he has reached he is an expert angler. His favourite method is to fish with the minnow, but he knows how to cast a fly with graceful precision. After toiling fruitlessly with me all day this young "Iz. W." will go out of an evening and, somehow or other, bring home a brace of trout for certain. My pleasure in catching

a trout is ten times enhanced by his shouts of enjoyment as he deftly places the net under him. "Now, sir," cries he, "we are going to have some sport!" He knows all the flies in my book much better than I; he can tie my flies much more quickly than I can. He climbs trees up to most dangerous places like a squirrel or a monkey, and brings down my hung-up fly in no time. If he cannot reach the branch overhanging a deep hole he whips out a knife and off comes the branch in a jiffy. He knows all the birds on the river, their names and their nests. He showed me a kingfisher's nest in a hole in the bank; he found a water-ouzel's nest with four eggs in it; that was when I was down here some weeks ago, now the old birds are busy feeding the young ones. One day he drew my attention to a moor-hen's nest built on a pile of segs* in a little island amid-stream; there were five eggs in it, and another nest close by with two eggs.

The next day he cried, "They boys have bin here, sir; all them eggs is gone!" He is very well educated, and is fond of rolling out fine words sometimes, but he prefers the vernacular. There are several pairs of sandpipers on our stretch of the river, and he knows of one nest with four eggs in it; he says it is funny to see the antics of the old ones, crying "wheet, wheet," and trying to draw him off from the nest.

I lost him one day when I sadly wanted him. At a point where the river flows under the railway

* *Seg* is a local term for *sedge*.—A. A.

arches a trout was rising on the far side of the stream close up against a stone wall, and just behind a tuft of segs a foot high—a most difficult place for a long cast, for I had an alder above me, an apple-tree behind me, and the railway and signal-wire close against and above me; but I wanted that trout. I made several ineffectual casts; at last I got my G.O.M. neatly over that tuft of segs, I hooked him, and now comes the tug-of-war. How surprised he was; how he leaped out of the water, dashed under the railway arch, up-stream into a bank of weeds, down again, and at last got fixed in some *débris* of sticks round the buttress of the arch, and there for a long time he kept my rod bent double, for I dared not give him any play, the stream under the arch being strong. At last he comes out, and to my surprise he came gently into the net without any further display of the vigour with which he started. Happily, it chanced that though Master Izaak was absent the Professor was there, looking on and giving me, as he always does, the most friendly advice.

“Mind your rod,” cries he, “he’ll break it.” “Give him a little play! hold on! don’t let him get under the arch; keep him out of the weeds; here he comes!” He landed him nicely for me, and then we found out why he came in so tamely at last. He had managed to wind the gut two or three times round his body, and was, in fact, bound “hand and foot.”

I was rather proud of that trout, for I had caught



him, considering the situation, rather skilfully. By this success I was emboldened to try a still more difficult task, standing exactly on the same spot. A trout was rising higher up and more towards the middle of the stream, but close under a small island of weeds. The Professor said it was sheer folly to make the attempt, and he was quite right. My first cast fixed my fly high up in a branch of the overhanging alder. Sometimes a sharp tug will dislodge it from the tender young twigs, but not so on this occasion. I am a bit too old, especially when encumbered with heavy wading boots, to scramble up trees. Not so the Professor; he was determined that collar should not be lost. He is no longer young, but he is tough. How he laboured and puffed and squeezed himself up that tree was a sight to see. He soon released my collar. That confounded trout kept on rising. I tried all I could to get round the drooping branches of that alder to avoid the signal-wire above me and the trees and bushes behind and in front of me. I thought I had got my line out in spite of these obstacles, when a sudden gust from the east drove my fly up into that alder and lodged it in its old quarters. My good Professor had scarcely landed from the tree in a state of physical collapse. He did not use bad language, because he never does. Up he went again, and down he brought my fly once more, but I made no further attempt to get over that still rising trout. The Professor, who is a score of years my junior, did not forget to lecture me on my

juvenile folly in expecting to catch a fish in such an impossible place as that, and I was humbled and contrite.

Notwithstanding the prevailing inclemency of the weather, and the general disinclination of the May Fly to appear or the trout to rise, we did not fare so very badly. I think I may say that few rising trout escaped us, and on the whole we were satisfied with the result of our daily labours. On Tuesday, the fifth day of June, the bells of our loyal village rang out, and the blacksmith's anvil, converted somehow into a formidable piece of artillery, sent up roaring and booming blasts to the evening sky—*Pretoria had fallen!* That day was our *red-letter day*, it marked our greatest success among the trout. The following Thursday, on the other hand, was a day of disaster.

We drove down the river for three miles, to lunch with a friend who had given us a day's fishing on his portion of the river. The weather was threatening in the morning, and after lunch the rain came down heavily. The river is two or three meadows from the house, and we were pressed to give it up; but our host's good cheer had inspired us with new ardour. Scorning a guide, over hedge and ditch I went, making, as I thought, to the nearest point for the river. I soon reached it, and began to fish. My first cast over a rising trout below a foot-bridge brought a nice one to grass. It brought up also a figure from behind the bridge, and I was sternly asked

by what right or by whose authority I was fishing there. I said I was there by the sanction of the owner of the water, and I mentioned his name. "This is not your friend's water, it is mine. This is the third time within three days that my land and my water have been trespassed on, and I will stand it no longer. I must request you to give me your name, and I shall summons you at once." I gave him my name. I humbly apologized. I explained how my mistake had arisen. I told him that I rented a mile of the river higher up, that I had a clear run of at least three miles of it, and he must surely see that I had innocently intruded on less than two hundred yards of his, and I offered him and his friend a day's fishing on my water in exchange for the five minutes I had unconsciously stolen on his. He was mollified at last, and we parted good friends. I was glad, for I am sure that none of you, my friends, would have been pleased to hear that the A. A. had been taken to quod for poaching.

Then I rejoined the Professor, who had kept on legitimate ground, but no more fishing had we. It came on to rain—it poured—it was a deluge, and we had no shelter. We made straight for home through meadows of mowing grass two miles in length, and interesting objects we were when we turned up at the Old Inn.

When I was fishing two years ago on the Wiltshire Avon with my good old friend, J. G. Morten, now, alas! departed, I found him wearing a

peculiar helmet of his own invention. It goes by the name of BURBERRY'S GABARDINE COMBINATION FISHING HELMET. It has a peak back and front and all round, and a double rim in the fold of which one can wind an extra collar and insert a reserve of flies without exposure. I had possessed myself of one of these admirable waterproof contrivances, but, alas! now that I most wanted it I had left it at home. My old felt was no match for the storm—my head and neck were well soaked. I had on a waterproof cape, which was no protection for my legs and feet. The Professor was as badly off, and the active little Izaak was all but drowned. How I longed for that curious helmet and coveted that singular mantle which Mr Burberry calls the patent SLIP-ON. I have straightway ordered one; and never again on doubtful days will I go a-fishing without it, for it seems to me to be light and long, and soft and pliant as silk, and presents no obstacle to one's fishing. After this soaking we dined happily, we slept soundly, and next morning we were as fresh as young larks. But my May Fly fishing for the year 1900 was over. I had to leave my good old friend the Professor alone in his glory, and I rejoice to hear that after I left he had some real sport.

I have headed this article "In Pursuit of the May Fly." It will be seen from what I have written that the pursuit has not been grand in its results. The first days of June did not prove to

be such as my eager fancy painted them. I had looked for bright, genial days, occasional summer clouds, and gentle breezes to tone down the brilliance of the water. I expected to find May flies and other insects wantonly and joyously in swarms dancing upwards and downwards in the warm air, clustering on branches or long grass stems or floating and fluttering on the water. I had dreamed of big trout flopping up and making great circles where the river runs deep and slow. I had hoped to listen to the music of the birds, and watch the brilliant kingfisher dart along the stream. I had pictured myself casting my "counterfeit presentment" daintily over these rising fish, and bringing them to grass in pleasant profusion. Such things I have known in the pleasant days of old. These dreams, and hopes and expectations were not realized. The beginning of June 1900 resembled the beginning of March. It is true that the birds sang when the howling winds gave them a chance ; it is true that the May Fly did appear intermittently ; it is true that the trout rose occasionally ; it is true that we caught a goodly number of them ; but they were caught laboriously. The joy and the glow and the charm of the brightest and leafiest and sweetest month of the year was not there. It did not inspire us. Like Mark Tapley, we had to make our own cheerfulness.

Sic transit gloria piscatorium !

THE GANDER AND THE MAY FLY.

An old friend called on me the other day, and was good enough to tell me that he had read my article, "In Pursuit of the May Fly," with much interest, "but," said he, "you have put your foot in it, you have made a terrible mistake. I am a bit of a naturalist, and I beg to inform you that it is contrary to the nature of a gander or a goose to eat a May Fly. They are not insectivorous, they are farinaceous, herbivorous, graminivorous birds." I was completely bowled over, I was humbled. Of course, I presume it will have been understood that as I was a mile away when that gander discovered and, as I imagined, devoured that solitary May Fly, I was not there to see the deed done, but who could have supposed that a gander could have been so qualmish, when he saw that luscious insect for the first time in a twelvemonth, as not to try what it tasted like; and, having tasted, would he not have felt a new sensation like that which that great lubberly boy Bo-bo felt when he first tasted roast pig? It may be, for aught I know, that that gander was the first of his species who had ever tasted May Fly; and this it was that caused him and his family to take that tremendous flight and come down upon the river as an avalanche comes down on Mont Blanc, and so spoil my fishing for half-a-mile. But surely at other times and other May Fly seasons, when I have seen long grass stems over-

hung with May Fly, have my eyes deceived me when I have seen a flock of geese poking about the banks and stripping those grass stems; and was I not justified in thinking that it was the insect and not the grass they were after? But I am flooded; I acknowledge it. My philosopher is a naturalist, an ornithologist, a poet, and a philosopher, and who am I to contradict him? I have no such pretensions. He could, I doubt not, fully demonstrate to me or any one else, that a goose's gizzard would reject a May Fly or any other insect. I submit to his superior wisdom, and I fall back upon ducks. I hope he won't try to disturb my faith in ducks, and tell me that neither ducks nor swallows swallow May Flies. If he does I shall revolt.

I may say that I have looked through all the authorities on British birds in my possession, such as Gilbert White, Bewick, and Bishop Stanley, but none of them have anything special to say about the food of the domestic goose. I presume because everybody is supposed to know that a goose is above all else a grass-eating bird. Mr Howard Saunders, I think, saves my reputation by remarking that the food of the Snow Goose in summer consists of green rushes, *insects*, and in autumn of berries. If a Snow Goose devours insects, then surely the white domestic gander may be tempted to do the same when such a precious morsel as a May Fly seduces him from his habitual ways—I say nothing of the Solan Goose, whose food is mostly little fishes.



CHAPTER XIII

FLY FISHING NEAR SCARBOROUGH— THE FORGE VALLEY

July 1900

SINCE I last had the pleasure of addressing you from (not to be too precise) a county bordering on Wales, I have been spending the remainder of what the young folks in the City are good enough to say is "a well-earned holiday," in the North Riding of Yorkshire, at Scarborough, a place not wholly unknown, and needing no reason that I know of that I should attempt to popularize it. I am not much attracted by the sea, that is to say, I cannot for the life of me sit all day on the sands, or lounge about on the parades. The Spa, with all its attractions for the young and the gay, has little or no attraction for an old fellow such as I am. I am constrained to admit, however, that the gardens are exceeding pretty, and gay with the choice flower-beds and winding paths in and about the wooded cliffs. Do not for a moment suppose that I despise these

lovely scenes. I am sure if I were of the same age as any of the young folk I see about me, I should, like them, adore them, as, indeed, I did once many and many a year ago, when "youth and I" were here together. I came here mainly because I was assured there was some good trout fishing to be got within an easy distance—in the Yorkshire Derwent, and nearer still, in Scalby Beck—but I must confess that I am a fair-weather fisherman, and the sort of weather which I found on the borders of Wales has pursued me to the eastern coast of Yorkshire. I have been here for a fortnight, and this, my last day, I can truly say is the only nice genial July day that I have had since here I have been. I am not going to complain of the weather—one has to accept it, however rough or disagreeable it may be. My chief objection to it has been that it was not of the sort that I like when I go a-fishing.

One doubtful morning early I started off for the village of Ayton, five miles away, just where the Derwent emerges from the beautiful Forge Valley. I had provided myself with a five-shilling ticket for the day. I engaged a nice lad to accompany me, and we started in very unpromising weather—the river dead and motionless, grass long and wet, the air leaden and oppressive, betokening a thunderstorm, which came on heavily before we had long been at work. The laws of this club are stringent and severe. *No trout shall be taken under eight inches in length, nor shall*

more than ten brace of trout be taken in a day. There must be a superabundance of trout in this valley, for I learn that some five thousand yearlings were put in a year ago, and to these two thousand have been added this year ; the probability is that the river is overstocked, which also may account for the smallness of the fish at the present time. Doubtless here and there a big trout may be hidden away close under the banks, but there was no rise of fly to tempt them up. I was not long in hooking three brace, of which I lost one brace, and the others I put back, being, as I guessed, for I had no measure with me, under eight inches. When I met the keeper afterwards I found to my grief that my rule of thumb measurement was quite wrong—according to true measurement I had put back four nine-inch trout. I got only a brace and a half afterwards, all of the same size, and then came on such tempestuous weather that I gave it up.

I gave up my ticket to the keeper, and on examining it, "Ah!" said he, "I remember a young gentleman of the same name as this who was here about eighteen years ago for three days. I remember him as well as if it was yesterday, for he was the best fisherman I ever saw on this river. Why, he carried off his ten brace of trout every day—and they were big 'uns here in those days—to say nothing of the lots he had to put back, as being beyond his limit." I could only remark that he must have a very good memory, otherwise

there was nothing very remarkable in the fact of two men of the same name having fished that river at an interval of eighteen years. The most curious part of the coincidence was that in turning up an old number of the *Fishing Gazette* (August 19, 1882) I came upon an article entitled, "Fly Fishing near Scarborough," written by a gentleman of the same name, which quite confirms the keeper's report to me; and so this wonderful angler turns out to be not only of the same name as, but somewhat more than a personal acquaintance of my own, *Piscator Major* by name.

I only travelled up the river as far as the wood extends, and then the weather sent me back. I was told afterwards that I should have done far better if I had begun to fish where I left off, and fished in the open meadows past the Everley Hotel, and up to Hackness.

This very day, my last at Scarborough, has been really a lovely summer day. I have just taken a trip, in order to realize the scene and get a better idea of the country, on a four-horse char-a-banc, round through Ayton and up by the side of the river through the Forge Valley, past Lord Derwent's place, through the village of Hackness, back through Scalby, and here; and what a lovely thirteen-mile drive it was on the only really fine day we have had. We stopped for half-an-hour at the Everley Hotel (the only inn within three miles). There arrived about the same time ten other char-a-bancs, as they call

them—ugly French name—why not call them brakes? or, as they call them in Cornwall, Jersey cars. Each of these ten vehicles carried about twenty-five passengers, so that there must have been two hundred and fifty in all, glad young people let loose in these pretty grounds and thoroughly enjoying the only fine day they have seen for weeks. Among them were two or three happy anglers, who immediately wended their way down to the river. How I envied them as I saw the tops of their rods glinting in the sun! Why had I not brought my rod with me? The char-a-banc may have gone on to Jericho, I would not have gone with it. Hereabouts I am told is the best fishing on the Derwent.

But to return to my first day's fishing after this long digression. I have no other incident to relate than that, unluckily, in making a cast, unaware that my boy was too close behind me, I caught him by the ear—my fly was firmly fixed in the rim of it—he screamed out, and unfortunately tore away at the hook, thereby causing much bloodshed and only driving it in more securely. As some of my readers may remember, I have had personal experience of an eyed hook firmly fixed—not in the ear, but in a still more prominent feature. I hesitated to perform such a delicate surgical operation as was evidently necessary in this case, so I hurried him away home. He started off on his bicycle two miles away, and came back before I left the village with

the fly still sticking in his ear. The doctor was not at home.

I have just had a note from his mother, telling me that he saw the doctor at twelve o'clock the same night, that the operation was successfully performed, and the wound is healing.





CHAPTER XIV

FLY FISHING NEAR SCARBOROUGH—SCALBY BECK

I HAD been told that Scalby Beck was a good trout stream; the trout are bigger there, running to a pound or two. One was caught there not long ago weighing four pounds, but they are few and far between, and difficult to catch, and as there is a select club of a dozen members owning the water, and they give strangers the great privilege of fishing there at the rate of 5s. a day, I was tempted to give it a trial. I drove up there one gloomy morning, intending to fish up the beck from the sea, as I had been advised. I landed on the bridge which crosses the stream close to the sea, and I looked about for a lad to carry my "Patent Slip-on," my bag, and my net, etc.; but neither boy nor man was to be seen. After a time I saw a tramp coming along the road. He had the appearance of being an honest lad "down on his luck." I asked him if he wanted a job, and if he would go a-fishing with me. He said he would, as he hadn't a copper in his pocket, and

had tasted no food that day. He was not exactly the style of boy to do one much credit as a gillie. He wore a passable jacket, and I am inclined to think he had a shirt on, for there was something white sticking out of a big hole in his trousers not far away from the tail of his jacket, and his shoes were in a sad state of dilapidation ; but I judged him, not by his rags, but by his pleasant blue eyes and honest-looking countenance. Poor chap ! he had a famished, hungry look. I handed him the few little biscuits I happened to have in my pocket, and I engaged him there and then as my body-servant for the day. He put on my fishing-bag, which covered up a good deal that was not sightly ; he followed me, and turning to the left after crossing the bridge, we pursued our way along the north side of the stream. We met an old man, who said that the long pool in front of us was full of tremendously big chub—but I did not want chub. He said I had better cross the water at a sort of weir a little higher up. I followed his advice—confound him. I found myself in an entanglement of scrub bushes, burdocks, nettles, thorns, great tall things with enormous leaves as high as my head—I think they are called wild rhubarb. Through this impenetrable forest I had to scramble and steer my rod, which was every moment catching in something or other overhead, for a quarter of a mile, but scarcely a glimpse could I get of the beck, and my man followed me with bag and baggage, till we came to a tall fence, which I got over somehow His legs

were, as he said, "more soople" than mine, and he got over easily. We then found ourselves in an open field, but far up above the water, which on both sides was everywhere closely lined with bushes, and inaccessible. By perseverance we found an opening at last down to the water, which just here was running in a little dribbling stream, for the beck, as far as I could see of it, consisted wholly of absolutely dead, slimy pools or little trickling streams such as the one we had now reached. As there seemed no prospect of getting near the water on our side, we walked across once more to the north side without wetting the soles of our boots. Alas ! that side was even worse. We pushed along somehow, up and down banks, till we came to what seemed to be somebody's garden. The upper part of it was laid out with flower-beds, but the part down by the water was an uncultivated wild, "where weeds and flowers promiscuous grow." We could see no other way out, so we broke into this garden and got across to a rocky place, above which we at last came to an open pool—dead and slimy-looking. We were now close to the village, and the water looked and smelled as if it was strongly impregnated with the sewage of that village.

By and by we reached the turnpike road, and crossing it, to pursue our course up this lovely beck, we encountered a notice board : "*No road—Trespassers will be prosecuted.*" I interpreted this to apply to outsiders, not to such as myself, armed as

I was with a *five-shilling ticket*. Up to this point I may say I had scarcely seen the river. I had a rare scramble of ups and downs, and many chances of tumbling down into unseen crevasses covered over with ferns or nettles, but never an opportunity of seeing a fish, or rise, or casting my line upon the water ; so I boldly passed this notice-board and followed the south side of the river—the water here looked a little more lively—and in a very inaccessible place I actually saw a rise ! I tried between the bushes below me, for I was on a high bank, to get over that fish, when suddenly across the water came a stentorian voice : “Are you aware, sir, that you are trespassing ?” I looked up and I saw two gentlemen standing on the opposite bank. I explained apologetically that I certainly was not aware of it ; that I held a ticket from the Scalby Beck Club, which I supposed entitled me to fish up to the Derwent. “You are mistaken, sir ; the river between these two bridges is my private property. However,” he most kindly added, “as you are there you may fish on if you like up to the bridge. I may tell you that you will find the gate locked, but I dare say you will manage to get over it somehow.” He added, smilingly, “You may get some better fishing above the bridge than I am afraid you have had down below.” I did manage somehow to climb over that terrible spiked gate, but it was at the risk of seriously injuring myself, and my “soople” companion got over easily. We found ourselves in the turnpike road. I vowed I would

fish no more. I have gone into these details because I really think it is improper that a club—composed, I have no doubt, of gentlemen—should demand 5s. for a day's walk such as I have attempted faithfully to describe. I can only regard it as an unwarrantable imposition. One wonders for what purpose such a club exists. It does absolutely nothing to keep the river in decent order, and I venture to think that if any member of it ever attempts to follow in my footsteps through that pathless jungle it could only be in expiation of, and as a terrible penance for, sins of omission as well as commission as regards this wretched ditch. I presume it is considered to be a perfectly useless extravagance to put a keeper to watch on that hideous beck; he would surely soon commit suicide. At all events, I never saw a human being from one end to the other. I could certainly have performed the deeds I did with perfect impunity, and without paying 5s. for a ticket. It may be that at certain times and seasons this beck, which, it appears, is nothing but an outlet for the overflow of the Derwent in times of flood, may afford sport for anglers, and probably there are big trout in it, as the ticket agent told me, but my experience may serve as a caution to other anglers to be careful how and when they lay out their money if they expect to do better than I did. The game is certainly not worth the candle. We walked along the turnpike road till, weary, exhausted, and exasperated, we found welcome at an inn. There I gave my

tramp such a "tuck-out" as he did not appear to have had for a long time. He said he was a turner by trade, that he had been thrown out of work at Manchester, was tramping that day from Scarborough to Whitby (twenty-two miles) on his way home to Newcastle, where he had friends. He had carried my "swag" carefully through the woods, and only lost two useful web straps, which may have been torn from his ragged pockets by the brambles. I furnished him not only with a bellyful of food, but some means to pursue his long journey, and I assure you the gratitude the poor fellow showed by his words and his looks was an abundant reward for me for the trials we had undergone together.

Never again will I attempt to fish in Scalby Beck.

A writer in the *Scarborough Post*, under the pseudonym *Blue Dun*, animadverts in a kindly way on my adventures. He pities me for having recourse to a tramp to carry my impedimenta, and expresses a wish that he had been with me, as he could have put me "in the way of bagging a few pounders." Of course I should have been delighted to have had his company had I known of him, who seems to know the beck so well, but I went in pure ignorance, never dreaming but that I should meet with some living being who could show me the way. I thought that at least I should find the keeper whom *Blue Dun* mentions, but whom I soon came to regard as a myth. I described my

own experiences, and I must adhere to them. And I advise the twelve members comprising the Scalby Beck Club (of whom *Blue Dun* says he is one) to keep this precious beck wholly in their own hands, and on no account to allow any outsider to fish in it.*

* I find that *Piscator Major* does not agree with me as to the angling capacities of the beck. He saw it in better times, caught some big trout there, and he it was who first advocated the preservation of it ; but he does agree with me that if the sewage of a village is turned into the only decent pool, then preservation is a farce.





CHAPTER XV

FISHERMAN'S LUCK

SMALL claim have I to call myself a fisherman, for although in the thralldom of a long and busy life I have had constantly before the eyes of my mind the possible charm of fishing in some picturesque and secluded spot, away, far away, from the hubbub and the noise and the garish turmoil of the city, how rarely have I been able to convert these dreams into pleasant realities! My too prolonged incarceration reminds me of the familiar lines from Keats' sonnet—

"To one who has been long in city pent,
'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
And open face of heaven, to breathe a prayer
Full in the smile of the blue firmament."

During the last sixteen years of my life I have written quite a pile of little booklets, all of which record, more or less, my various angling experiences, and I think I may safely say they do not badly represent what I may call FISHERMAN'S LUCK.

They tell the story of very many absolute failures, and of singularly few even moderate successes. It may be for this very reason that they have from first to last been so kindly and so indulgently received by the Press and by a numerous public; my good friends may quite reasonably have argued they must necessarily have at least the merit of truthfulness, for who would go out of his way to tell untruthfully the story of his failures?

Successes or failures, there is not a day among all those angling days that I cannot look back on with unfeigned pleasure, mixed, it is true, with a melancholy feeling of regret that they belong to a time that is past.

If, taken as a whole, the days of our pilgrimage are "few and evil," as said the patriarch Jacob unto Pharaoh, I will say at least that few and pleasant have been my angling days.

One of the many pleasant things about angling is the glorious uncertainty of it. Who, when he goeth forth of a morning full of the true angler's enthusiasm, can foresee or foretell what the day may bring forth? True, he hopeth with abounding hope that his basket will be filled, but if he returns at the close of the day with his basket as light as it was in the morning, never does he think of exclaiming *O, amici! perdidit diem!* Quite the contrary; he rejoiceth that he has gained experience, and his hope for the morrow is kindled afresh by his failure of to-day. Blustering wind

may have taken place of the mild zephyr which the morn betokened ; scorching sunshine or tempestuous downpour may have spoilt his sport ; he complaineth not whilst he hath a "to-morrow" to retrieve the fortunes of to-day. It is only when that to-morrow has to bear him away from his pleasant haunts and hurry him back to the hateful city that his equanimity is somewhat disturbed.

It is sixteen years and more since, for the first and only time, I explored the beauties of Dovedale. There it was that I caught my first trout from the placid waters of the enchanted Dove, my first trout for perhaps forty years, for during that rather long period of time, when considered as a slice out of the usual span of human life, I had scarcely ever held a rod. Ah, that was a pleasant time ! We reached, as I well remember, that delightful old hotel, The Izaak Walton, in a tremendous downfall of rain, and we left it in a thunderstorm ; but the three weeks we spent there were glorious, and never to be forgotten by me. The story of it I ventured to tell in my first booklet—*An Amateur Angler's Days in Dovedale*.

Since that good time I have fished occasionally in many rivers ; although counted in days the sum total for sixteen years would not amount to many. I have had some successes and many failures, but every one of those days have been red-letter days. To have had and delighted in them I will always regard as my FISHERMAN'S LUCK.

The cause of my drifting into this long preliminary rigmarole, is that I have just now been reading a book called—

FISHERMAN'S LUCK AND SOME OTHER UNCERTAIN THINGS. By HENRY VAN DYKE.

The paper, printing, and pictures in this pretty book are pleasant to look upon, and the contents such as you may expect to find, being written by the same accomplished and facile hand that wrote *Little Rivers*, that charming book to which some year or two ago I drew attention. I desire to do the same with *Fisherman's Luck*; not critically, for I am no critic, but just to gossip about it in my usual rambling fashion.

The writer is, I think, a popular preacher, having one of the largest congregations in New York; but he would fain lead us to believe that although to catch men is his daily occupation, in catching fishes lies his true vocation, because he was "born so." He himself acknowledges that his chosen pursuit is *angling*, which he "follows with diligence when not interrupted by less important concerns," a statement, of course, not to be taken too seriously.

Mr Van Dyke is not only a great preacher and an enthusiastic angler, he is also a charming writer, and he adorns whatever subject he touches by the cultivated tone of his style and the brightness and daintiness of his humour.

I shall, perforce, confine myself to some of

the fishing chapters, from which I propose to appropriate a few choice bits in which I think anglers would be interested.

When I was fishing on Lake Vyrnwy a few years ago, I had a little adventure with Madame Sandpiper and her little brood, which I gave an account of in *By Meadow and Stream*. I was, on that account, particularly interested in reading Mr Van Dyke's adventure with a Canadian sandpiper. I must quote his description of it in full—

"I was walking up the Ristigouche, from Camp Harmony to Mowett's Rock, where my canoe was waiting for me, to fish for salmon. As I stepped out from a thicket on to the shingly bank of the river a spotted sandpiper teetered along before me, followed by three young ones. Frightened at first, she flew out a few feet over the water; but the piperlings could not fly, having no feathers, and they crept under a crooked log. I rolled the log over very gently, and took one of the cowering creatures into my hand—a tiny palpitating scrap of life, covered with soft grey down, and peeping shrilly like a Liliputian chicken. And now the mother was transformed. Her face was changed into fury. She was a bully, a fighter, an amazon in feathers. She flew at me with loud cries, dashing herself almost into my face; I was a tyrant, a robber, a kidnapper, and she called heaven to witness that she would never give up her offspring without a struggle. Then she changed her tactics, and appealed to my baser passions.

She fell to the ground, and fluttered around me as if her wings were broken. 'Look!' she seemed to say, 'I am bigger than that poor little baby. If you must eat something, eat me! My wing is lame, I can't fly. You can easily catch me. Let that little bird go!' And so I did; and the whole family disappeared in the bushes as if by magic."

Mr Rudyard Kipling, in a letter to the editor of the *Fishing Gazette* a few months ago, in a reply to a previous suggestion that he had taken Pacific Coast salmon with the fly, said: "In the language of the immortal Jorrocks, spoon! spoon! spoon! 'Fly' is a slip of the rod. Those brutes won't rise to it." Still the question, "*Do Salmon take the Fly in Salt Water?*" is an open question.

Mr Van Dyke was once fishing on a fair little river, the P'tit Saguenay, with two friends, who had done all that could be done to secure sport, but the weather was "dour" and the water "drumly," and every day the lumbermen sent a "drive" of ten thousand spruce logs rushing down the flooded stream. Not having seen a salmon for four days, they went down into the tide water of the greater Saguenay.

"There, in the salt water, where men say the salmon *never* take the fly, H. E. G—, fishing with a small trout rod, a poor, short line, and an ancient Red Ibis of the common kind, rose and hooked a lordly salmon of at least 35 lbs. Was not this pure *luck*? . . . Four times that great fish leaped into the air; twice he suffered the pliant reed to

guide him toward the shore, and twice ran out again to deeper water. Then his spirit awoke within him, he bent the rod like a willow wand, dashed toward the middle of the river, broke the line as if it had been pack-thread, and sailed triumphantly away to join the white porpoises that were tumbling in the tide. 'Whe-e-ew,' they said, 'whe-e-ew, psha-a-aw,' but what did H. E. G—say? . . . 'Those porpoises,' said he, 'describe the situation rather mildly, but it was good fun while it lasted.'"

The Thrilling Moment is the title of a very interesting chapter. In the autumn of 1894 Mr Van Dyke, his friend Paul, and Ferdinand their guide, went a-fishing for *ouananiche* in what he calls the *Unpronounceable river*. It was the last day with the land-locked salmon; they found the water coming down in flood. The stream was bank-full, gurgling and eddying out among the bushes, and rushing over the shoal where the fish used to lie, in a brown torrent ten feet deep, and their last day seemed destined to be a failure. Paul wandered down-stream to look after an eddy where he might pick up a small trout or two. Ferdinand resigned himself without a sigh to the consolation of eating blueberries, and our author, more disconsolate than his comrades, sat down among the rocks, and (to my gratified surprise) took from his pocket *An Amateur Angler's Days in Dovedale*, and settled down "to read himself into a Christian frame of mind."

I need not say that I regard this simple statement as the highest compliment that could be paid the "A. A."

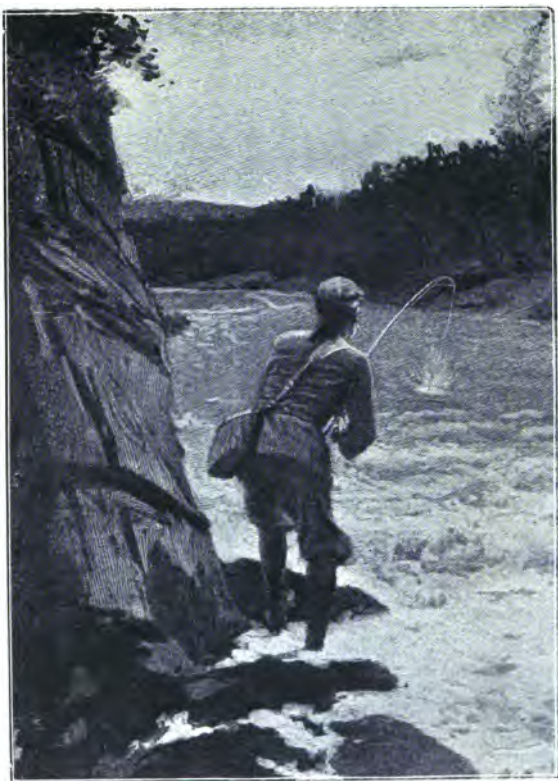
But the consolation to be derived from reading that little book was not needed ; it came in another and quite unexpected way, the whole aspect of affairs was suddenly changed. "Despondency vanished and the river glistens with the beams of rising hope."

"My immediate duty was to get within casting distance of that salmon as soon as possible. The way along the shore of the pool was difficult. The bank was very steep, and the rocks by the river's edge were broken and glibbery. Presently I came to a sheer wall of stone, perhaps thirty feet high, rising directly from the deep water. . . . The ledge in the rock now came to an end, but below me in the pool there was a sunken reef, and on this reef a long log had caught, with one end sticking out of the water within jumping distance. It was the only chance. To go back would have been dangerous. An angler with a large family dependent on him has no right to incur unnecessary perils. Besides, the fish was waiting for me in the pool ! So I jumped ; landed on the edge of the log ; felt it settle slowly down ; ran along it like a small boy on a see-saw, and leaped off into shallow water just as the log rolled from the ledge and lunged out into the stream. . . . The 'all ashore' bell was not rung early enough. I just got off with not half-a-second to spare."

After struggling to act deliberately, being himself of a precipitate nature, he set about selecting his flies, and having at length selected two that he thought fairly good, he laid them down on the grass to look through his book for something better, but finding nothing, he turned to pick up those he had laid down, only to find they had mysteriously vanished. Then he had a struggle with naughty words, and at last concluded that "precipitation is a fault, but deliberation in a person of precipitate disposition is a vice."

Having exhausted his fly-book in casting flies over that ouananiche which the fish would not look at, he was about to give up in despair.

"At this psychological moment I heard behind me a voice of hope—the song of a grasshopper. I believed that he was the destined lure for that ouananiche, but it was hard to persuade him to fulfil his destiny. I slapped at him with my hat, but he was not there; I grasped at him on the bushes, and brought away 'nothing but leaves.' At last he made his way to the very edge of the water, and poised himself on a stone, with his legs tucked in for a long leap and a bold flight to the other side of the river. I made a desperate grab at it, and caught the grasshopper. . . . When that *kri-karee* went floating down the stream, the ouananiche was surprised. It was the 14th of September, and he had supposed the grasshopper season was over. The unexpected temptation was too strong for him. He rose with a rush, and in



FISHERMAN'S LUCK. THRILLING MOMENT.--p. 128.



an instant I was fast to the best land-locked salmon of the year. . . . My rod weighed only $4\frac{1}{2}$ ozs.; the fish weighed between 6 lbs. and 7 lbs.; the water was furious and headstrong; I had only thirty yards of line, and no landing-net.

"*'Hold! Ferdinand,'* I cried. *'Apporte la nette, vite! A beauty! Hurry up!'* . . .

"A dozen times he leapt from the water, but at last he was played out, and came in quietly towards the point of the rock. At the same moment Ferdinand appeared with the net. . . . Ferdinand is the best netsman in the Lake St John country. . . . Just at the right instant he made one quick, steady swing of the arms, and—the head of the net broke clean off the handle and went floating away with the fish in it!

"All seemed to be lost; but Ferdinand was equal to the occasion. He seized a long crooked stick that lay in a pile of driftwood on the shore, sprang into the water up to his waist, caught the net as it drifted past, and dragged it to land, with the ultimate ouananiche, the prize of the season, still glittering through its meshes. This is the story of my most thrilling moments as an angler."

The picture represents the thrilling moment when the ouananiche was led into temptation by the grasshopper.



CHAPTER XVI

ANIMALS OF TO-DAY

WHEN I was young I saw visions, and when I grew old I dreamed dreams of some time or other, always in the dim vista of a distant future, breaking the chain which binds me to the "madding crowd's ignoble strife," and of taking my departure to some rural spot where I might uninterruptedly devote my leisure to the study of Nature, and particularly to that form of it which Izaak Walton calls "the contemplative man's recreation." It is many years since I crossed the Rubicon, beyond whose limits the Psalmist declares our "strength to be but labour and sorrow," and I yet, foolish dreamer ! still dream on of

" Meadows trim and daisies pied,
Shallow brooks and rivers wide,"

where the chief employment of my idle time, "not idly spent," would be the practice of the art of angling ; "a rest to the mind, a cheerer of the spirits, a calmer of unquiet thoughts, a diverter

of sadness, a procurer of contentedness," as said Sir Henry Wotton.

But now, alas ! I am beginning to realize that these are but the "phantoms of hope," never to be realized ; and yet, in one sense, I may regard myself as a mere youth when I compare my age with that of "the good old man," Dr Nowell, once Dean of St Paul's, who attained the age of ninety-five. "His age neither impaired his hearing, nor dimmed his eyes, nor weakened his memory, nor made any of the faculties of his mind weak and useless." Now, this good old man, says Walton, "spent a tenth part of his time in angling, and it is said that angling and temperance were great causes of these blessings."

Izaak Walton says of that "undervaluer of money," Sir Henry Wotton, that when he was beyond seventy years he made this description of a part of the pleasure which possessed him, as he sat quietly on a summer's evening on a bank a-fishing, from which I quote the two first verses, although I know that they are familiar to all anglers—

"This day Dame Nature seemed to love :
The lusty sap began to move ;
Fresh juice did stir th' embracing vines,
And birds had drawn their valentines.

"The jealous trout that low did lie,
Rose at the well-dissembled fly ;
There stood my friend with patient skill,
Attending of his trembling quill."

And surely it was angling and temperance combined that prolonged the days of Izaak Walton himself to the age of ninety, notwithstanding the troublous times in which he lived.

Charles Lamb, who himself greatly preferred "the pavements of the motley Strand to mountains and romantic dales, and all that fantastic stuff," bore most interesting testimony to the charm of Walton. I unexpectedly came across the following lines in Keble's *Christian Year*, a little volume, by the way, perhaps not very familiar to anglers in general, but well suited for the side-pocket when they go a-fishing—

"Oh, who shall tell how calm and sweet,
Meek Walton! seems thy green retreat,
When wearied with the tale thy times disclose,
The eye first finds thee out in thy secure repose."

With these great exemplars before me I will not all hope abandon of yet finding "a green retreat" before the final retreat under the green sod.

"We are such stuff as dreams are made of,
And our little life is rounded by a sleep."

I think it was from a feeling akin to envy which arose within me on reading a book entitled, *ANIMALS OF TO-DAY: THEIR LIFE AND CONVERSATION*, By C. J. CORNISH, so full of country life, that led me into so long a digression about my own pent-up existence in a great city, and to "babble o' green fields" beyond my reach. I have read it with much pleasure, and have found in it

much information about a great variety of animals written in a familiar and attractive style.

In some chapters we are told how certain wild animals have managed to maintain themselves during the bad times of the nineteenth century ; "their shifts and expedients, and personal idiosyncrasies, and instances of their survival under difficulties. . . . Other chapters deal with the wonderful progress of the domestic kinds."

My own knowledge of animals being more or less confined to the domestic cat, for which animal I have at best but a moderate liking, and at worst a very distinct aversion, I will quote a few lines of what Mr Cornish has to say about them—

"The number of cats in London," he says (his authority being the *Daily Mail*), "is four hundred thousand." Surely that must be a very low estimate ; there must be more cats than dogs in this vast metropolis, and yet I have seen it stated that about a tenth of that number of dogs (say forty thousand) is annually murdered by the police, for no other crime than having shuffled off their miserable muzzles ! Now, if it be allowed that one-tenth of the dogs of London were thus ruthlessly destroyed, it would bring the total number of London dogs to the same number as the cats ; but, after all, I leave the matter in the competent hands of Mr Cornish and the *Daily Mail* correspondent, whose figures are doubtless derived from actual counting of the

cats, while I have certainly not counted the dogs. Of the above number of cats, half are said to be of the happy domestic kind, and half of the wild, "unattached," starved, homeless sort. Now, if the police would destroy all unattached cats, and leave the dogs alone, they would earn the gratitude instead of the anathemas of the community at large. It seems, however, that even these poor creatures are not wholly to be despised, for it is largely owing to these starved wretches that London is preserved from a plague of rats; it is through their vigilance that "in most parts of London rats have been driven underground into the sewers by the warfare of cats."

"The London cat," says Mr Cornish, "is sleepy and quiet all day," but it is unnecessary to be told that "he is an early riser," for we all know it to our sorrow. "In summer mornings, from four A.M. to five A.M., London ceases to belong to the world of men, and is given up to the sole enjoyment of London birds and London cats." Then it is, alas! or long before then, that the sleepless biped is aroused from his first short sleep by the exasperating howls and unearthly screams of cats on the lawn under his bedroom window.

As I have said, I am but moderately fond of even a respectable, quiet, home-bred cat. The one that looks after my mice is perfectly black, his coat is thick and glossy—not a speck of white on him. He is now about four years old, and has seen and suffered much affliction in his time. One

evening, two years since, "he would a-woeing go, whether his missis would let him or no!" and he was terribly punished for his disobedience.

He did not come back for a fortnight, and he was mourned as lost. At length, however, his missis (our cook) heard a faint wailing down the garden. She doted on him, and so ran out to see what was the matter—and what an object met her view! There was *Charlie*, but he was wild, he would not come near her. He was ashamed, no doubt, of his personal appearance, for he was literally nothing but skin and bones—there was not a particle of hair or fur on his whole body—his skin was bare as parchment. It was quite evident that some inhuman two-legged beast had caught him, and probably dipped him in petroleum and then set him afire. He was truly a heart-rending spectacle. His missis shed tears, mostly because he wouldn't come near her. She put down food for him in the garden, and when there was no one near he would come up and greedily devour it. This went on for a day or two. At last she coaxed him into the kitchen, and there he was tenderly nursed for many a day, till his hair began to grow again, and he gradually became a cheerful, happy cat. Now he is a picture of grave respectability. There is no frolicsome nonsense about him—all that has been burnt out of him. He is mostly confined to the kitchen, and he knows his position exactly. Formerly he was given to scratching my dining-room chairs to pieces, so he

had to be sent away. He comes up, however, at breakfast-time, rubs himself against my legs, looks up at me, and cries "Mew!" by which he means to say, "Good-morning! How are you? Have you used——?" I reply, "Good-morning, Charlie!" pat him and stroke him, and then he toddles off down-stairs. He never shows the least desire to eat anything; his only object is to show himself, ask after my health, and then to retire. Notwithstanding this friendly familiarity indoors, if I meet him in the garden he is off like a shot; he won't come near me. Clearly, he still retains some bitter memory of the past, and suspects even me. Only this morning I met him, and he shot away as usual; but that was owing to his guilty conscience, for I found he had been scratching big holes in the beds which the gardener had only yesterday neatly covered over with tan to protect the young bulbs—such is the aggravating nature of even the best of cats! As for his torturers, I charitably hope some day to see them tarred and feathered on Hampstead Heath.

Mr Cornish tells us that the North-American puma is positively friendly to man, and quotes many instances of this friendliness. I may say, that when I was travelling in the Rocky Mountains some years ago, I encountered one of these remarkable animals. He is without the mane of the African lion, is much smaller, and of a more genial aspect, and the opinion I formed of him entirely coincides with and confirms Mr

Cornish's reports. He stood in the centre of the large hall of the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel, in the Yellowstone Park. A card which he held firmly in his mouth invited me to "meet him by moonlight alone." I declined the invitation, but according to all accounts I should have met with a most friendly reception. As an instance of this, Mr Cornish tells of a gentleman, "who was going up one of the rivers in Venezuela in his steam launch, and gave a passage to a Cornish miner, who was going up to the goldfields. The passenger, who was an elderly man, usually slung his hammock on shore. One morning, being asked how he had slept, he complained that the frogs had wakened him by croaking near his hammock. Some Indians who had been taking down the hammock laughed, and being asked the reason, still laughing, said, 'O, tiger sleep with old man last night.'" "They had satisfied themselves that a puma had been lying just under the hammock, and it was probably the satisfied purring of the puma, which had enjoyed the pleasure of sleeping 'in the next berth' below a man, that had wakened the occupant of the hammock."

In the chapter on "Animals as Colonists," Mr Cornish says that nearly all the domestic animals now in Australia and New Zealand are of British origin; there are now in round numbers one hundred and eleven millions of sheep, nine millions of cattle, and one million three hundred thousand horses. The English rabbit and the

English sparrow are the only unwelcome guests ; but I am told that for the rabbit, now so terribly prolific in Australia, there has been found another market, soon to be developed.

THE CUCKOO.

In that very pleasant book by Mr G. A. B. Dewar, *Wild Life in Hampshire Highlands*, the author has a good deal to say about my favourite, the cuckoo, that singular bird so often heard and so rarely seen, excepting at a distance and on the wing. Not long ago I made a closer acquaintance with a cuckoo than I had ever had before. Early in June 1899 I was lounging on the lawn of a country house in Buckinghamshire watching the children playing croquet, when a French lady came up to me with a strange bird in her hands. "Voilà ! monsieur," cried she, "c'est un coucou, n'est-ce-pas ?" "Ah, oui, madame," said I, "c'est une chose extraordinaire." The bird apparently in its headlong flight had accidentally dashed through the bath-room window, either in pursuit of, or being pursued by a bevy of small birds, who have no friendly feeling towards this robber of their nests and murderer of their young ; and there she captured it. It was a lovely young specimen, in its finest plumage. I had never seen one so near at hand before. The youngsters all wanted to keep it in a cage, but I felt sure that it would soon die in captivity, and so

reluctantly we let it off. Away it flew, and soon we heard its joyful if slightly monotonous old familiar song in the distant wood.

I gather from Mr Dewar that the great Doctor Jenner, the discoverer of vaccination for the cure of smallpox, was an observant ornithologist. He made a note of the fact that he had seen "a young cuckoo just hatched and quite blind thrust out both a young bird and an egg which were the rightful occupants of the usurped nest."

Jenner's story has not been accepted by all naturalists. Waterton poured contemptuous ridicule upon it. Whether a few-hours-old cuckoo could get the bird upon its back, climb up and throw it overboard or not may be still open to question; but the fact that cuckoos do deposit their eggs in the nests of other birds has long been settled. Gilbert White has much to say on the subject. Mr Dewar himself gives an interesting account of his discovery of a "hideous young bird, naked, blind, and glistening as though it had been polished," in a wren's nest, out of which the wren's eggs had been ejected, three of which were found on the ground. He concluded that this feeble, helpless log could not possibly have ejected the eggs, and that they must have been thrown out by the wrens themselves, or by the old cuckoo.

What will, of course, be of special interest to anglers, is the chapter on *Angling in Hampshire*, chiefly on the Test and its tributaries, a chapter of pleasant experiences, interesting theories, and

piscatorial adventures, which will give rise to pleasant reminiscences, and perhaps excite some questionings in the minds of anglers who have fished the Test and the Itchen, and who, of course, have their pet theories on every question that can be raised on the various modes of capturing the well-educated trout in these delightful rivers.

THE END

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